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THE DIALOGUE OF THE SERAPHIC VIRGIN CATHERINE OF SIENA

Andreu Vannis pinxit

St. Catherine of Siena.

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THE DIALOGUE OF THE SERAPHIC VIRGIN CATHERINE OF SIENA

Dictated by Her, while in a State of Ecstasy, to her Secretaries, and Completed in the Year of Our Lord 1370. *Together with an* ACCOUNT OF HER DEATH BY AN EYEWITNESS *Translated from the Original Italian, and preceded by an* INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE SAINT, BY ALGAR THOROLD

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INTRODUCTION

It would be hard to say whether the Age of the Saints, "*le moyen âge énorme et délicat*," has suffered more at the hands of friends or foes. It is at least certain that the medieval period affects those who approach it in the manner of a powerful personality who may awaken love or hatred, but cannot be passed over with indifference. When the contempt of the eighteenth century for the subject, the result of that century's lack of historic imagination, was thawed by the somewhat rhetorical enthusiasm of Chateaubriand and of the Romanticists beyond the Rhine, hostility gave place to an indiscriminating admiration. The shadows fell out of the picture; the medieval time became a golden age when heaven and earth visibly mingled, when Christian society reached the zenith of perfection which constituted it a model for all succeeding ages. Then came the German professors with all the paraphernalia of scientific history, and, looking through their instruments, we, who are not Germans, have come to take a more critical and, perhaps, a juster view of the matter. The Germans, too, have had disciples of other nations, and though conclusions on special points may differ, in every country now at a certain level of education, the same views prevail as to the principles on which historical investigation should be conducted. And yet, while no one with a reputation to lose would venture on any personal heresy as to the standards of legitimate evidence, the same facts still seem to lead different minds to differing appreciations. For history, written solely *ad narrandum*, is not history; the historian's task is not over when he has disinterred facts and established dates: it is then that the most delicate part of his work begins. History, to be worthy of the name, must produce the illu-

sion of living men and women, and, in order to do this successfully, must be based, not only upon insight into human nature in general, but also upon personal appreciation of the particular men and women engaged in the episodes with which it deals. With facts as such there can indeed be no tampering; but for the determination of their significance, of their value, as illustrative of a course of policy or of the character of those who were responsible for their occurrence, we have to depend in great measure on the personality of the historian. It is evident that a man who lacks the sympathetic power to enter into the character that he attempts to delineate, will hardly be able to make that character live for us. For in Art as well as Life, sympathy is power.

Now while this is true of all history whatever, it is perhaps truer of the history of the Middle Ages than of that of any more recent period, nor is the reason of this far to seek. The Middle Ages were a period fruitful in great individuals who moulded society to an extent that perhaps no succeeding period has been. In modern times the formula, an abstraction such as "Capital" or the "Rights of Man," has largely taken the place of the individual as a plastic force. The one great tyrant of the nineteenth century found his opportunity in the anarchy which followed the French Revolution. The spoil was then necessarily to the strong. But even Napoleon was conquered at last rather by a conspiracy of the slowly developing anonymous forces of his time than by the superior skill or strength of an individual rival. The lion could hardly have been caught in such meshes in the *trecento*. Then, the fate of populations was bound up with the animosities of princes, and, in order to understand the state of Europe at any particular moment of that period, it is necessary to understand the state of soul of the individuals who happened, at the time, to be the political stake-holders.

It must not be thought, however, that the personality of the Prince was the only power in the medieval State, for the Prince himself was held to be ultimately amenable

to an idea, which so infinitely transcended earthly distinctions as to level them all in relation to itself. Prince and serf would one day appear as suppliants before the judgement-seat of Christ, and the theory of medieval Christianity was considerably in favour of the serf. The Father of Christendom, at once priest and king, anointed and consecrated as the social exponent of the divine justice, could not, in his own person, escape its rigours, but must, one day, render an account of his stewardship. Nor did the medieval mind, distinguishing between the office and the individual, by any means shrink from contemplating the fate of the faithless steward. In a "Last Judgement" by Angelico at Florence, the ministers of justice seem to have a special joy in hurrying off to the pit popes and cardinals and other ecclesiastics.

For it is an insufficient criticism that has led some to suppose that the medieval Church weighed on the conscience of Christendom solely, or even primarily, as an arbitrary fact: that the priesthood, aided by the ignorance of the people, succeeded in establishing a monstrous claim to control the destinies of the soul by quasi-magical agencies and the powers of excommunication. Nothing can be further from the truth. Probably at no period has the Christian conscience realised more profoundly that the whole external fabric of Catholicism, its sacraments, its priesthood, its discipline, was but the phenomenal expression, necessary and sacred in its place, of the idea of Christianity, that the vitality of that idea was the life by which the Church lived, and that by that idea all Christians, priests as well as laymen, rulers as well as subjects, would at the last be judged. When Savonarola replied to the Papal Legate, who, in his confusion, committed the blunder of adding to the formula of excommunication from the Church Militant a sentence of exclusion from the Church Triumphant, "You cannot do it," he was in the tradition of medieval orthodoxy. Moreover, even though the strict logic of her theory might have required it, the hierarchical Church was not considered as the sole manifestation of the divine will to Christendom. The unanimity

with which the Christian idea was accepted in those times made the saint a well-known type of human character, just as nowadays we have the soap-king or the demagogue. Now the saint, although under the same ecclesiastical dispensation as other Christians, was conceived to have his own special relations with God, which amounted almost to a personal revelation. In particular he was held to be exempt from many of the limitations of fallen humanity. His prayers were of certain efficacy; the customary uniformities of experience were thought to be constantly transcended by the power that dwelt within him; he was often accepted by the people as the bearer to Christendom of a divine message over and above the revelation of which the hierarchy was the legitimate guardian. Not infrequently indeed that message was one of warning or correction to the hierarchy. Sabatier points out truly that the medieval saints occupied much the same relation to the ecclesiastical system as the prophets of Israel had done, under the older dispensation, to the Jewish priesthood. They came out of their hermitages or cloisters, and with lips touched by coal from the altar denounced iniquity wherever they found it, even in the highest places. It is needless to say that they were not revolutionaries; for them, as for other Christians, the organisation of the Church was divine; it was by the sacred responsibilities of his office that they judged the unworthy pastor.

An apt illustration of this attitude occurs in the life of the Blessed Colomba of Rieti. Colomba, who was a simple peasant, was called to the unusual vocation of preaching. The local representatives of the Holy Office, alarmed at the novelty, imprisoned her and took the opportunity of a visit of Alexander VI to the neighbouring town of Perugia to bring her before His Holiness for examination. When the Beata was brought into the Pope's presence, she reverently kissed the hem of his garment, and, being overcome with devotion at the sight of the Vicar of Christ, fell into an ecstasy, during which she invoked the divine judgement on the sins of Rodrigo Borgia. It was useless to attempt to stop her; she was beyond the control of

inquisitor or guards, the Pope had to hear her out. He did so; proclaimed her complete orthodoxy, and set her free with every mark of reverence. In this highly characteristic episode scholastic logic appears for once to have been justified, at perilous odds, of her children.

* * * * *

Midway between sky and earth hangs a City Beautiful: Siena, *Vetus Civitas Virginis*. The town seems to have descended as a bride from airy regions and lightly settled on the summits of three hills, which it crowns with domes and clustering towers. As seen from the vineyards which clothe the slopes of the hills or with its crenellated wall and slender-necked Campanile silhouetted against the evening sky from the neighbouring heights of Belcaro, the city is familiar to students of the early Italian painters. It forms the fantastic and solemn background of many a masterpiece of the *trecentisti*, and seems the only possible home, if home they can have on earth, of the glorified persons who occupy the foreground. It would create no surprise to come, while walking round the ancient walls, suddenly, at a turn in the road, on one of the sacred groups so familiarly recurrent to the memory in such an environment: often indeed one experiences a curious illusion when a passing friar happens for a moment to "compose" with cypress and crumbling archway.

Siena, once the successful rival of Florence in commerce, war, and politics, has, fortunately for the more vital interests which it represents, long desisted from such minor matters. Its worldly ruin has been complete for more than five hundred years; in truth, the town has never recovered from the plague which, in the far-off days of 1348, carried of 80,000 of its population. Grassy mounds within the city walls mark the shrinking of the town since the date of their erection. The free Ghibelline Republic, which, on that memorable September 4, 1260, defeated, with the help of Pisa, at Monte Aperto, the combined forces of the Guelph party in Tuscany, has now, after centuries of servitude to Spaniard and Austrian, to be

content with the dignity of an Italian Prefettura. At least the architectural degradation which has overtaken Florence at the hands of her modern rulers has been as yet, in great measure, spared to Siena. Even the railway has had the grace to conceal its presence in the folds of olive which enwrap the base of the hill on which the city is set.

Once inside the rose-coloured walls, as we pass up the narrow, roughly paved streets between lines of palaces, some grim and massive like Casa Tolomei, built in 1205, others delicate specimens of Italian Gothic like the Palazzo Saracini, others again illustrating the combination of grace and strength which marked the domestic architecture of the Renaissance at its prime, like the Palazzo Piccolomini, we find ourselves in a world very remote indeed from anything with which the experience of our own utilitarian century and land makes us familiar. And yet, as we rub our eyes, unmistakably a world of facts, though of facts, as it were, visibly interpreted by the deeper truth of an art whose insistent presence is on all sides of us. Here is Casa Tolomei, a huge cube of rough-hewn stone stained to the colour of tarnished silver with age, once the home of that Madonna Pia whose story lives for ever in the verse of Dante. Who shall distinguish between her actual tale of days and the immortal life given her by the poet? In her moment of suffering at least she has been made eternal. And not far from that ancient fortress-home, in a winding alley than can hardly be called a street, is another house of medieval Siena—no palace this time, but a small tradesman's dwelling. In the fourteenth century it belonged to Ser Giacomo Benincasa, a dyer. Part of it has now been converted into a chapel, over the door of which are inscribed the words: *Sponsae Xti Katerinae Domus*. Here, on March 5, 1347, being Palm Sunday, was born Giacomo's daughter Caterina, who still lives as one of the purest glories of the Christian Church under the name of St Catherine of Siena. More than 500 years have passed since the daughter of the Sienese dyer entered into the rest of that sublime and touching symbolism under

which the Church half veils and half reveals her teaching as to the destiny of man. Another case, but how profoundly more significant than that of poor Madonna Pia, of the intertwining of the world of fact with the deeper truth of the Spirit!

St Catherine was born at the same time as a twin sister, who did not survive. Her parents, Giacomo and Lapa Benincasa, were simple townspeople, prosperous, and apparently deserving their reputation for piety. Lapa, the daughter of one Mucio Piagenti, a now wholly forgotten poet, bore twenty-five children to her husband, of whom thirteen only appear to have grown up. This large family lived together in the manner still obtaining in Italy, in the little house, till the death of Giacomo in 1368.

There are stirring pages enough in Christian hagiography. Who can read unmoved of the struggles towards his ideal of an Augustine or a Loyola, or of the heroic courage of a Teresa, affirming against all human odds the divinity of her mission, and justifying, after years of labour, her incredible assertions by the steadfastness of her will? There are other pages in the lives of the saints, less dramatic, it may be, but breathing, nevertheless, a naïve grace and poetry all their own: the childhood of those servants of Christ who have borne his yoke from the dawn of their days forms their charming theme. Here the rays of the Sun of Justice are toned down to a soft and tender glow, in which the curves and lines of natural humanity do but seem more pathetically human. The hymn at Lauds for the Feast of the Holy Innocents represents those unconscious martyrs as playing with their palms and crowns under the very altar of heaven:

> "Vos prima Christi victima
> Grex immolatorum tener
> Aram sub ipsam simplices
> Palma et coronis luditis!"

And so these other saintly babies play at hermits or monasteries instead of the soldiers and housekeeping beloved of the more secular-minded infants. Heaven con-

descends to their pious revels: we are told of the Blessed Hermann Joseph, the Premonstratensian, that his infantile sports were joyously shared by the divine Child himself. He would be a morose pedant who should wish to rationalise this white mythology. The tiny Catherine was no exception to the rest of her canonised brothers and sisters. At the age of five it was her custom on the staircase to kneel and repeat a "Hail Mary" at each step, a devotion so pleasing to the angels that they would frequently carry her up or down without letting her feet touch the ground, much to the alarm of her mother. Nor were these phenomena the only reward of her infant piety. From the day that she could walk she became very popular among her numerous relatives and her parents' friends, who gave her the pet name of Euphrosyne, to signify the grief-dispelling effect of her conversation, and who were constantly inviting her to their houses on some pretext or other. Sent one morning on an errand to the house of her married sister Bonaventura, she was favoured with a beautiful vision, which, as it has an important symbolical bearing on the great task of her after-life, I will relate, slightly abridging the prolixity of Blessed Raymond of Capua in the *Leggenda Maggiore*:*

* Raimondo delle Vigne, born perhaps in 1330. Having entered the Dominican Order, he was appointed, probably in 1374, director of St Catherine by the Master-General, Elias of Toulouse. His *Leggenda Maggiore* is the fundamental source of all the Saint's biographers.

M. Robert Fawtier in his *Ste Catherine de Sienne: Essai de Critique des Sources—Sources Hagiographiques* (Paris, Boccard, 1921), has argued powerfully against the historical value of the *Leggenda,* and his considered conclusion is that the work is merely a piece of pro-Urbanist propaganda and quite unreliable for historical purposes. This is not the place to discuss the matter, but I will mention that his thesis is examined and rejected by M. E. Jordan in the *Analecta Bollandiana,* 1923, vol. xi, pp. 365-411, and by the well-known Dominican medievalist, Père Mandonnet, in the *Année Dominicaine,* 1923, pp. 6-17 and 43-52. The definite results of M. Fawtier's investigations will only be apparent when he publishes his promised second volume on the life of the Saint, which will be constructive in nature.

"So it happened that Catherine, being arrived at the age of six, went one day with her brother Stephen, who was a little older than herself, to the house of their sister, Bonaventura, who was married to one Niccolo, as has been mentioned above, in order to carry something or give some message from their mother Lapa. Their mother's errand accomplished, while they were on the way back from their sister's house to their own and were passing along a certain valley, called by the people Valle Piatta, the holy child, lifting her eyes, saw on the opposite side above the Church of the Preaching Friars a most beautiful room, adorned with regal magnificence, in which was seated, on an imperial throne, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, clothed in pontifical vestments, and wearing on his head a papal tiara; with him were the princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, and the holy evangelist John. Astounded at such a sight, Catherine stood still, and with fixed and immovable look gazed full of love on her Saviour, who, appearing in so marvellous a manner, in order sweetly to gain her love to himself, fixed on her the eyes of his majesty, and, with a tender smile, lifted over her his right hand, and, making the sign of the holy cross in the manner of a bishop, left with her the gift of his eternal benediction. The grace of this gift was so efficacious that Catherine, beside herself, and transformed into him upon whom she gazed with such love, forgetting not only the road she was on, but also herself, although naturally a timid child, stood still for a space with lifted and immovable eyes in the public road, where men and beasts were continually passing, and would certainly have continued to stand there as long as the vision lasted had she not been violently diverted by others. But while the Lord was working these marvels, the child Stephen, leaving her standing still, continued his way down hill, thinking that she was following, but, seeing her immovable in the distance and paying no heed to his calls, he returned and pulled her with his hands, saying: 'What are you doing here? Why do you not come?' Then Catherine, as if waking from a heavy sleep, lowered her

eyes and said: 'Oh, if you had seen what I see, you would not distract me from so sweet a vision!' and lifted her eyes again on high; but the vision had entirely disappeared, according to the will of him who had granted it, and she, not being able to endure this without pain, began with tears to reproach herself for having turned her eyes to earth." Such was the "call" of St Catherine of Siena, and, to a mind intent on mystical significance, the appearance of Christ, in the semblance of his vicar, may fitly appear to symbolise the great mission of her after-life to the holy See.

* * * * *

Much might be said of the action of Catherine on her generation. Few individuals perhaps have ever led so active a life or have succeeded in leaving so remarkable an imprint of their personality on the events of their time. Catherine the Peacemaker reconciles warring factions of her native city and heals an international feud between Florence and the Holy See. Catherine the Consoler pours the balm of her gentle spirit into the lacerated souls of the suffering wherever she finds them, in the condemned cell or in the hospital ward. Though she never learned to write, she kept up, by means of secretaries, a constant correspondence with a band of disciples, male and female, all over Italy, and last, but not least, with the distant Pope at Avignon.

Her lot was cast on evil days for the Church and the Peninsula. The thirteenth century, the apogee of the Middle Ages, was over. Francis and Dominic had come and gone, and though Franciscans and Dominicans remained and numbered saints among their ranks, still the first fervour of the original inspiration was a brightness that had fled. The moral state of the secular clergy was, according to Catherine herself, too often one of the deepest degradation, while, in the absence of the Pontiff, the States of the Church were governed by papal legates, mostly men of blood and lust who ground the starving people under their heel. Assuredly it was not from Chris-

tian bishops who would have disgraced Islam that their subjects could learn the path of peace. The Pope's residence at Avignon, the Babylonish Captivity, as it was called, may have seemed, at the time when his departure from Rome was resolved upon, a wise measure of temporary retreat before the anarchy which was raging round the city of St Peter. But not many years passed before it became evident that Philip the Fair, the astute adviser to whose counsel—and possibly more than counsel—Clement had submitted in leaving Rome, was the only one who profited by the exile of the Pope. Whatever the truth may be about the details of Clement's election, so far as his subserviency to the French king went, he might have remained Archbishop of Bordeaux to the end of his days. He accepted for his relations costly presents from Philip; he placed the papal authority at his service in the gravely suspicious matter of the suppression of the Templars. Gradually the Holy See in exile lost its œcumenical character and became more and more the vassal of the French Crown. Such a decline in its position could not fail to affect even its doctrinal prestige. It was well enough in theory to apply to the situation such maxims as *Ubi Petrus ibi Ecclesia*, or, as the Avignonese doctors paraphrased it, *Ubi Papa ibi Roma;* but, in practice, Christendom grew shy of a French Pope living under the eye and power of the French king. The Romans, who had always treated the Pope badly, were furious when at last they had driven him away, and gratified their spite by insulting their exiled rulers. Nothing could exceed their contempt for the Popes of Avignon, who, as a matter of fact, though weak and compliant, were in their personal characters worthy ecclesiastics. They gave no credit to John XXII, who canonised St Thomas Aquinas, for his genuine zeal in the cause of learning, or the energy with which he restored ecclesiastical studies in the Western schools. For Benedict XII, a retiring and abstemious student, they invented the phrase *bibere papaliter*—to drink like the Pope. Clement VI they called *poco religioso*, forgetting his noble charity at the time of the plague, and also the fact that

Rome herself had produced not a few Popes whose lives furnished a singular commentary on the ethics of the Gospel.

The real danger ahead to Christendom was the possibility of an Italian anti-Pope who should fortify his position by recourse to the heretical elements scattered through the peninsula. Those elements were grave and numerous. The Fraticelli, or Spiritual Franciscans, although crushed for the time by the iron hand of Pope Boniface, rather flourished than otherwise under persecution. These dangerous heretics had inherited a garbled version of the mysticism of Joachim of Flora, which constituted a doctrine perhaps more radically revolutionary than that of any heretics before or since. It amounted to belief in a new revelation of the Spirit, which was to supersede the dispensation of the Son as that had taken the place of the dispensation of the Father. According to the eternal Gospel of Gerard of San Donnino, who had derived it, not without manipulation, from the writings of Abbot Joachim, the Roman Church was on the eve of destruction, and it was the duty of the *Spirituali*, the saints who had received the new dispensation, to fly from the contamination of her communion. An anti-Pope who should have rallied to his allegiance these elements of schism would have been a dangerous rival to a French Pope residing in distant Avignon, however legitimate his title. Nor was there wanting outside Italy matter for grave anxiety. Germs of heresy were fermenting north of the Alps; the preaching of Wycliffe, the semi-Islamism of the Hungarian Beghards, the theism of the Patarini of Dalmatia, the erotic mysticism of the Adamites of Paris, indicated a widespread anarchy in the minds of Christians. Moreover, the spiritual difficulties of the Pope were complicated by his temporal preoccupations. For good or ill, it had come to be essential to the action of the Holy See that the successor of the penniless fisherman should have his place among the princes of the earth.

The papal monarchy had come about, as most things come about in this world, by what seems to have been the

inevitable force of circumstances. The decay of the imperial power in Italy, due to the practical abandonment of the Western Empire—for the ruler of Constantinople lived at too great a distance to be an effective Emperor of the West—had resulted in a natural increase of secular importance to the See of Rome. To the genius of Pope Gregory I, one of the few men whom their fellows have named both Saint and Great, was due the development of the political situation thus created in Italy.

Chief and greatest of bishops in his day was St Gregory the Great. Seldom, if ever, has the papal dignity been sustained with such lofty enthusiasm, such sagacious political insight. Himself a Roman of Rome, *Romano di Roma*, as those who possess that privilege still call themselves to-day, the instinct of government was his by hereditary right. His missionary enterprise was characterised by a shrewd and gracious condescension to the limitations of human nature. Thus he counsels St Augustine, who had consulted him as to the best means of extirpating the pagan customs of our English forefathers, to deal gently with these ancient survivals. He ruled that the celebration of the Festivals of the Saints should if possible be held at the times and places at which the people had been in the habit of meeting together to worship the gods. They would thus come to associate the new religion with their traditional merry-makings, and their conversion would be gradually, and as it were unconsciously, effected. It was a kindly and statesmanlike thought. In this way Gregory may truly be looked upon as the founder of popular Catholicism, that "pensive use and wont religion," not assuredly in the entirety of its details Christian, but at least profoundly Catholic, as weaving together in the web of its own secular experience of man so large a proportion of the many-coloured threads that have at any time attached his hopes and fears to the mysterious unknown which surrounds him. No miracle is needed to explain the political ascendency which such a man inevitably came to acquire in an Italy deserted by the Empire, and, but for him and the organisation which

depended on him, at the mercy of the invading Lombard. More and more, people came to look on the Pope as their temporal ruler no less than as their spiritual father. In many cases, indeed, his was the only government they knew. Kings and nobles had conferred much property on the Roman Church. By the end of the sixth century the Bishop of Rome held, by the right of such donations to his See, large tracts of country, not only in Italy, but also in Sicily, Corsica, Gaul, and even Asia and Africa. Gregory successfully defended his Italian property against the invaders, and came to the relief of the starving population with corn from Sicily and Africa, thus laying deep in the hearts of the people the foundations of the political power of the Papacy.

It would be an unnecessary digression from our subject to work out in detail the stages by which the Pope came to take his place first as the Italian vicar of a distant emperor, and at length, as the result of astute statecraft and the necessities of the case, among the princes of Europe, as their chief and arbiter. So much as has been said was, however, necessary for the comprehension of the task with which Catherine measured, for the time, successfully her strength. It was given to the Popolana of Siena, by the effect of her eloquence in persuading the wavering will of the Pope to return to his See, to bring about what was, for the moment, the only possible solution of that Roman question which, hanging perpetually round the feet of the Bride of Christ, seems at every step to impede her victorious advance.

* * * * *

Nevertheless, it is neither the intrinsic importance nor the social consequences of her actions that constitute the true greatness of St Catherine. Great ends may be pursued by essentially small means, in an aridity and narrowness of temper that goes far to discount their actual achievement. History, and in particular the history of the Church, is not wanting in such instances. Savonarola set great ends before himself—the freedom of his country and

the regeneration of the State; but the spirit in which he pursued them excludes him from that Pantheon of gracious souls in which humanity enshrines its true benefactors. "Soul, as a quality of style, is a fact," and the soul of St Catherine's *gesta* expressed itself in a "style" so winning, so sweetly reasonable, as to make her the dearest of friends to all who had the privilege of intimate association with her, and a permanent source of refreshment to the human spirit. She intuitively perceived life under the highest possible forms, the forms of Beauty and Love. Truth and Goodness were, she thought, means for the achievement of those two supreme ends. The sheer beauty of the soul "in a state of Grace" is a point on which she constantly dwells, hanging it as a bait before those whom she would induce to turn from evil. Similarly the ugliness of sin, as much as its wickedness, should warn us of its true nature. Love, which, in deepest truth, *is*, in the words of St John, God himself, is, at once, the highest achievement of man and his supreme and satisfying beatitude. The symbols of Catholic theology were to her the necessary and fitting means of transit, so to speak. See, in the following pages, the fine allegory of the Bridge of the Sacred Humanity, of the soul *in via* on its dusty pilgrimage towards those gleaming heights of vision.

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The Dialogue of St Catherine of Siena was dictated to her secretaries by the Saint in ecstasy. Apart from the extraordinary circumstances of its production, this work has a special interest.

The composition of the Sienese dyer's daughter, whose will, purified and sublimated by prayer, imposed itself on Popes and princes, is an almost unique specimen of what may be called theological spirituality; for its special value lies in the fact that from first to last it is nothing more than a devotional exposition of the creeds taught to every child in the Catholic poor schools. Her insight is sometimes very wonderful. How subtle, for instance, is the analysis of the state of the "worldly

man" who loves God for his own pleasure or profit! The special snares of the devout are cut through by the keen logic of one who has experienced and triumphed over them. Terrible, again, is the retribution prophesied to the "unworthy ministers of the blood."

And so every well-known form of Christian life, healthy or parasitic, is treated of, detailed, analysed incisively, remorselessly, and then subsumed under the general conception of God's infinite loving-kindness and mercy.

The great mystics having usually taken as their starting-point what, to most, is the goal hardly to be reached, their own treatment of the preliminary stages of spirituality is frequently conventional and *jejune*.

Compare, for instance, the first book with the two succeeding ones, of Ruysbroeck's *Ornement des Noces spirituelles*, that unique breviary of the Christian Platonician. As a result the literature of this subject, with certain noble exceptions, has fallen into the hands of a class of writers, or rather purveyors, well-intentioned, no doubt, but not endowed with the higher spiritual and mental faculties, whom it is not unfair to describe as the *feuilletonistes* of piety. Such works, brightly bound, are appropriately exposed for sale in the Roman shop windows among the gaudy *objets de religion* they so much resemble. To keep healthy and raise the tone of devotional literature is surely an eighth spiritual work of mercy. St Philip Neri's advice in the matter was to prefer those writers whose names were preceded by the title of Saint. In the *Dialogo* we have a great Saint, one of the most extraordinary women who ever lived, treating, in a manner so simple and familiar as at times to become almost colloquial, of the elements of practical Christianity. Passages occur frequently of lofty eloquence, and also of such literary perfection that this book is held by critics to be one of the classics of the age and land which produced Boccaccio and Petrarch. To-day, in the streets of Siena, the same Tuscan idiom can be heard, hardly altered since the days of St Catherine.

One word as to the translation. I have almost always

followed the text of Gigli, a learned Sienese ecclesiastic, who edited the complete works of St Catherine in the eighteenth century. His is the latest edition printed of the *Dialogo*. Once or twice I have preferred the *cinquecento* Venetian editor. My aim has been to translate as literally as possible, and at the same time to preserve the characteristic rhythm of the sentences, so suggestive in its way of the sing-song articulation of the Sienese of to-day. St Catherine has no style as such; she introduces a metaphor and forgets it; the sea, a vine, and a plough will often appear in the same paragraph, sometimes in the same phrase. In such cases I have occasionally taken the liberty of adhering to the first simile when the confusion of metaphor in the original involves hopeless obscurity of expression.

THE DIALOGUE OF ST CATHERINE OF SIENA

A TREATISE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

CHAPTER I

How a soul, elevated by desire of the honour of God, and of the salvation of her neighbours, exercising herself in humble prayer, after she had seen the union of the soul, through love, with God, asked of God four requests.

THE soul, who is lifted by a very great and yearning desire for the honour of God and the salvation of souls, begins by exercising herself, for a certain space of time, in the ordinary virtues, remaining in the cell of self-knowledge, in order to know better the goodness of God towards her. This she does because knowledge must precede love, and only when she has attained love, can she strive to follow and to clothe herself with the truth. But in no way does the creature receive such a taste of the truth, or so brilliant a light therefrom, as by means of humble and continuous prayer, founded on knowledge of herself and of God; because prayer, exercising her in the above way, unites with God the soul that follows the footprints of Christ crucified, and thus, by desire and affection, and union of love, makes her another himself. Christ would seem to have meant this, when he said: *To him who will love me and will observe my commandment, will I manifest myself; and he shall be one thing with me and I with him.* In several places we find similar words, by which we can see that it is, indeed, through the effect of love, that the soul becomes another himself. That this may be seen more clearly, I will mention what I remember having heard

from a handmaid of God, namely, that when she was lifted up in prayer, with great elevation of mind, God was not wont to conceal from the eye of her intellect the love which he had for his servants, but rather to manifest it; and that, among other things, he used to say: "Open the eye of thy intellect, and gaze into me, and thou shalt see the beauty of my rational creature. And look at those creatures who, among the beauties which I have given to the soul, creating her in my image and similitude, are clothed with the nuptial garment (that is the garment of love), adorned with many virtues, by which they are united with me through love. And yet I tell thee, if thou shouldest ask me who these are, I should reply" (said the sweet and amorous word of God) "they are another myself, inasmuch as they have lost and denied their own will, and are clothed with mine, are united to mine, are conformed to mine." It is therefore true, indeed, that the soul unites herself with God by the affection of love.

So, that soul, wishing to know and follow the truth more manfully, and lifting her desires first for herself—for she considered that a soul could not be of use, whether in doctrine, example, or prayer, to her neighbour, if she did not first profit herself, that is, if she did not acquire virtue in herself—addressed four requests to the Supreme and Eternal Father. The first was for herself; the second for the reformation of the holy Church; the third a general prayer for the whole world, and in particular for the peace of Christians who rebel, with much lewdness and persecution, against the holy Church; in the fourth and last, she besought the divine Providence to provide for things in general, and in particular, for a certain case with which she was concerned.

CHAPTER II

How the desire of this soul grew when God showed her the neediness of the world.

THIS desire was great and continuous, but grew much more, when the First Truth showed her the neediness of the world, and in what a tempest of offence against God it lay. And she had understood this the better from a letter, which she had received from the spiritual Father of her soul, in which he explained to her the penalties and intolerable dolour caused by offences against God, and the loss of souls, and the persecutions of holy Church.

All this lighted the fire of her holy desire with grief for the offences, and with the joy of the lively hope, with which she waited for God to provide against such great evils. And, since the soul seems, in such communion, sweetly to bind herself fast within herself and with God, and knows better his truth, inasmuch as the soul is then in God, and God in the soul, as the fish is in the sea, and the sea in the fish, she desired the arrival of the morning (for the morrow was a feast of Mary) in order to hear Mass. And when the morning came, and the hour of the Mass, she sought with anxious desire her accustomed place; and, with a great knowledge of herself, being ashamed of her own imperfection, appearing to herself to be the cause of all the evil that was happening throughout the world, conceiving a hatred and displeasure against herself, and a feeling of holy justice, with which knowledge, hatred, and justice, she purified the stains which seemed to her to cover her guilty soul, she said: "O Eternal Father, I accuse myself before thee, in order that thou mayest punish me for my sins in this finite life, and, inasmuch as my sins are the cause of the sufferings which my neighbour must endure, I implore thee, in thy kindness, to punish them in my person."

CHAPTER III

How finite works are not sufficient for punishment or recompense without the perpetual affection of love.

THEN the Eternal Truth seized and drew more strongly to himself her desire, doing as he did in the Old Testament, for when the sacrifice was offered to God, a fire descended and drew to him the sacrifice that was acceptable to him; so did the sweet Truth to that soul, in sending down the fire of the clemency of the Holy Spirit, seizing the sacrifice of desire that she made of herself, saying: "Dost thou not know, dear daughter, that all the sufferings which the soul endures, or can endure, in this life, are insufficient to punish one smallest fault, because the offence, being done to me, who am the Infinite Good, calls for an infinite satisfaction? However, I wish that thou shouldest know, that not all the pains that are given to men in this life are given as punishments, but as corrections, in order to chastise a son when he offends; though it is true that both the guilt and the penalty can be expiated by the desire of the soul, that is, by true contrition, not through the finite pain endured, but through the infinite desire; because God, who is infinite, wishes for infinite love and infinite grief. Infinite grief I wish from my creature in two ways: in one way, through her sorrow for her own sins, which she has committed against me her Creator; in the other way, through her sorrow for the sins which she sees her neighbours commit against me. Of such as these, inasmuch as they have infinite desire, that is, are joined to me by an affection of love, and therefore grieve when they offend me, or see me offended, their every pain, whether spiritual or corporeal, from wherever it may come, receives infinite merit, and satisfies for a guilt which deserved an infinite penalty, although their works are finite and done in finite time; but, inasmuch as they possess the virtue of desire, and sustain their suffering with desire, and contrition, and infinite displeasure against their guilt, their pain is held worthy.

Paul explained this when he said: *If I had the tongues of angels, and if I knew the things of the future and gave my body to be burned, and have not love, it would be worth nothing to me.* The glorious Apostle thus shows that finite works are not valid, either as punishment or recompense, without the condiment of the affection of love."

CHAPTER IV

How desire and contrition of heart satisfies, both for the guilt and the penalty in oneself and in others; and how sometimes it satisfies for the guilt only, and not the penalty.

"I HAVE shown thee, dearest daughter, that the guilt is not punished in this finite time by any pain which is sustained purely as such. And I say, that the guilt is punished by the pain which is endured through the desire, love, and contrition of the heart; not by virtue of the pain, but by virtue of the desire of the soul; inasmuch as desire and every virtue is of value, and has life in itself, through Christ crucified, my only-begotten Son, in so far as the soul has drawn her love from him, and virtuously follows his virtues, that is his footprints. In this way, and in no other, are virtues of value, and in this way, pains satisfy for the fault, by the sweet and intimate love acquired in the knowledge of my goodness, and in the bitterness and contrition of heart acquired by knowledge of oneself and one's own thoughts. And this knowledge generates a hatred and displeasure against sin, and against the soul's own sensuality, through which she deems herself worthy of pains and unworthy of reward."

The sweet Truth continued: "See how, by contrition of the heart, together with love, with true patience, and with true humility, deeming themselves worthy of pain and unworthy of reward, such souls endure the patient humility in which consists the above-mentioned satisfaction. Thou askest me, then, for pains, so that I may receive satisfaction for the offences which are done against me by my creatures, and thou further askest the will to know and

love me, who am the Supreme Truth. Wherefore I reply that this is the way, if thou wilt arrive at a perfect knowledge and enjoyment of me, the Eternal Truth, that thou shouldest never get outside the knowledge of thyself, and, by humbling thyself in the valley of humility, thou wilt know me and thyself, from which knowledge thou wilt draw all that is necessary. No virtue, my daughter, can have life in itself except through charity and humility, which is the foster-mother and nurse of charity. In self-knowledge, then, thou wilt humble thyself, seeing that, in thyself, thou dost not even exist; for thy very being, as thou wilt learn, is derived from me, since I have loved both thee and others before you were in existence; and that, through the ineffable love which I had for you, wishing to re-create you to grace, I have washed you, and re-created you in the blood of my only-begotten Son, spilt with so great a fire of love. This blood teaches the truth to him who, by self-knowledge, dissipates the cloud of self-love, and in no other way can he learn. Then the soul will inflame herself in this knowledge of me with an ineffable love, through which love she continues in constant pain; not, however, a pain which afflicts or dries up the soul, but one which rather fattens her; for since she has known my truth, and her own faults, and the ingratitude of men, she endures intolerable suffering, grieving because she loves me; for, if she did not love me, she would not be obliged to do so; whence it follows immediately, that it is right for thee, and my other servants who have learnt my truth in this way, to sustain, even unto death, many tribulations and injuries and insults in word and deed, for the glory and praise of my name; thus wilt thou endure and suffer pains. Do thou, therefore, and my other servants, carry yourselves with true patience, with grief for your sins, and with love of virtue for the glory and praise of my name. If thou actest thus, I will satisfy for thy sins, and for those of my other servants, inasmuch as the pains which thou wilt endure will be sufficient, through the virtue of love, for satisfaction and reward, both in thee and in others. In thyself thou wilt receive

the fruit of life, when the stains of thy ignorance are effaced, and I shall not remember that thou ever didst offend me. In others I will satisfy through the love and affection which thou hast to me, and I will give to them according to the disposition with which they will receive my gifts. In particular, to those who dispose themselves, humbly and with reverence, to receive the doctrine of my servants, will I remit both guilt and penalty, since they will thus come to true knowledge and contrition for their sins. So that, by means of prayer, and their desire of serving me, they receive the fruit of grace, receiving it humbly in greater or less degree, according to the extent of their exercise of virtue and grace in general. I say then, that, through thy desires, they will receive remission for their sins. See, however, the condition, namely, that their obstinacy should not be so great in their despair as to condemn them through contempt of the blood, which, with such sweetness, has restored them.

"What fruit do they receive?

"The fruit which I destine for them, constrained by the prayers of my servants, is that I give them light, and that I wake up in them the hound of conscience, and make them smell the odour of virtue, and take delight in the conversation of my servants.

"Sometimes I allow the world to show them what it is, so that, feeling its diverse and various passions, they may know how little stability it has, and may come to lift their desire beyond it, and seek their native country, which is the eternal life. And so I draw them by these, and by many other ways, for the eye cannot see, nor the tongue relate, nor the heart think, how many are the roads and ways which I use, through love alone, to lead them back to grace, so that my truth may be fulfilled in them. I am constrained to do so by that inestimable love of mine, by which I created them, and by the love, desire, and grief of my servants, since I am no despiser of their tears, and sweat, and humble prayers; rather I accept them, inasmuch as I am he who give them this love for the good of souls and grief for their loss. But I do not, in general,

grant to these others, for whom they pray, satisfaction for the penalty due to them, but only for their guilt, since they are not disposed, on their side, to receive, with perfect love, my love, and that of my servants. They do not receive their grief with bitterness, and perfect contrition for the sins they have committed, but with imperfect love and contrition, wherefore they have not, as others, remission of the penalty, but only of the guilt; because such complete satisfaction requires proper dispositions on both sides, both in him that gives and him that receives. Wherefore, since they are imperfect, they receive imperfectly the perfection of the desires of those who offer them to me, for their sakes, with suffering; and, inasmuch as I told thee that they do receive remission, this is indeed the truth, that, by that way which I have told thee, that is, by the light of conscience, and by other things, satisfaction is made for their guilt; for, beginning to learn, they vomit forth the corruption of their sins, and so receive the gift of grace.

" These are they who are in a state of ordinary charity, wherefore, if they have trouble, they receive it in the guise of correction, and do not resist overmuch the clemency of the Holy Spirit, but, coming out of their sin, they receive the life of grace. But if, like fools, they are ungrateful, and ignore me and the labours of my servants done for them, that which was given them, through mercy, turns to their own ruin and judgement, not through defect of mercy, nor through defect of him who implored the mercy for the ingrate, but solely through the man's own wretchedness and hardness, with which, with the hands of his free will, he has covered his heart, as it were, with a diamond, which, if it be not broken by the blood, can in no way be broken. And yet I say to thee, that, in spite of his hardness of heart, he can use his free will while he has time, praying for the blood of my Son, and let him with his own hand apply it to the diamond over his heart and shiver it, and he will receive the imprint of the blood which has been paid for him. But, if he delays until the time be past, he has no remedy, because he has not used the

dowry which I gave him, giving him memory so as to remember my benefits, intellect so as to see and know the truth, affection so that he should love me, the Eternal Truth, whom he would have known through the use of his intellect. This is the dowry which I have given you all, and which ought to render fruit to me, the Father; but, if a man barters and sells it to the devil, the devil, if he choose, has a right to seize on everything that he has acquired in this life. And, filling his memory with the delights of sin, and with the recollection of shameful pride, avarice, self-love, hatred, and unkindness to his neighbours (being also a persecutor of my servants), with these miseries, he has obscured his intellect by his disordinate will. Let such as these receive the eternal pains, with their horrible stench, inasmuch as they have not satisfied for their sins with contrition and displeasure of their guilt. Now, therefore, thou hast understood how suffering satisfies for guilt by perfect contrition, not through the finite pain; and such as have this contrition in perfection satisfy not only for the guilt, but also for the penalty which follows the guilt, as I have already said when speaking in general; and if they satisfy for the guilt alone, that is, if, having abandoned mortal sin, they receive grace, and have not sufficient contrition and love to satisfy for the penalty also, they go to the pains of purgatory, passing through the second and last means of satisfaction.

"So thou seest that satisfaction is made, through the desire of the soul united to me, who am the Infinite Good, in greater or less degree, according to the measure of love obtained by the desire and prayer of the recipient. Wherefore, with that very same measure with which a man measures to me, does he receive in himself the measure of my goodness. Labour, therefore, to increase the fire of thy desire, and let not a moment pass without crying to me with humble voice, or without continual prayers before me for thy neighbours. I say this to thee and to the father of thy soul, whom I have given thee on earth. Bear yourselves with manful courage, and make yourselves dead to all your own sensuality."

CHAPTER V

How very pleasing to God is the willing desire to suffer for him.

"VERY pleasing to me, dearest daughter, is the willing desire to bear every pain and fatigue, even unto death, for the salvation of souls, for the more the soul endures, the more she shows that she loves me; loving me she comes to know more of my truth, and the more she knows, the more pain and intolerable grief she feels at the offences committed against me. Thou didst ask me to sustain thee, and to punish the faults of others in thee, and thou didst not remark that thou wast really asking for love, light, and knowledge of the truth, since I have already told thee that, by the increase of love, grows grief and pain, wherefore he that grows in love grows in grief. Therefore, I say to you all, that you should ask, and it will be given you, for I deny nothing to him who asks of me in truth. Consider that the love of divine charity is so closely joined in the soul with perfect patience, that neither can leave the soul without the other. For this reason (if the soul elect to love me) she should elect to endure pains for me in whatever mode or circumstance I may send them to her. Patience cannot be proved in any other way than by suffering, and patience is united with love as has been said. Therefore bear yourselves with manly courage, for, unless you do so, you will not prove yourselves to be spouses of my truth, and faithful children, nor of the company of those who relish the taste of my honour, and the salvation of souls."

CHAPTER VI

How every virtue and every defect is obtained by means of our neighbour.

"I WISH also that thou shouldest know that every virtue is obtained by means of thy neighbour, and likewise every defect; he, therefore, who stands in hatred of me, does an injury to his neighbour, and to himself, who is his

own chief neighbour, and this injury is both general and particular. It is general because you are obliged to love your neighbour as yourself, and loving him, you ought to help him spiritually, with prayer, counselling him with words, and assisting him both spiritually and temporally, according to the need in which he may be, at least with your goodwill if you have nothing else. A man therefore, who does not love, does not help him, and thereby does himself an injury; for he cuts off from himself grace, and injures his neighbour, by depriving him of the benefit of the prayers and of the sweet desires that he is bound to offer for him to me. Thus, every act of help that he performs should proceed from the charity which he has through love of me. And every evil also is done by means of his neighbour, for, if he do not love me, he cannot be in charity with his neighbour; and thus, all evils derive from the soul's deprivation of love of me and her neighbour; whence, inasmuch as such a man does no good, it follows that he must do evil. To whom does he evil? First of all to himself, and then to his neighbour, not against me, for no evil can touch me, except in so far as I count done to me that which he does to himself. To himself he does the injury of sin, which deprives him of grace, and worse than this he cannot do to his neighbour. Him he injures in not paying him the debt, which he owes him, of love, with which he ought to help him by means of prayer and holy desire offered to me for him. This is an assistance which is owed in general to every rational creature; but its usefulness is more particular when it is done to those who are close at hand, under your eyes, as to whom, I say, you are all obliged to help one another by word and doctrine, and the example of good works, and in every other respect in which your neighbour may be seen to be in need; counselling him exactly as you would yourselves, without any passion of self-love; and he (a man not loving God) does not do this, because he has no love towards his neighbour; and, by not doing it, he does him, as thou seest, a special injury. And he does him evil, not only by not doing him the good that he might do

him, but by doing him a positive injury and a constant evil. In this way sin causes a physical and a mental injury. The mental injury is already done when the sinner has conceived pleasure in the idea of sin, and hatred of virtue, that is, pleasure from sensual self-love, which has deprived him of the affection of love which he ought to have towards me, and his neighbour, as has been said. And, after he has conceived, he brings forth one sin after another against his neighbour, according to the diverse ways which may please his perverse sensual will. Sometimes it is seen that he brings forth cruelty, and that both in general and in particular.

"His general cruelty is to see himself and other creatures in danger of death and damnation through privation of grace, and so cruel is he that he reminds neither himself nor others of the love of virtue and hatred of vice. Being thus cruel he may wish to extend his cruelty still further, that is, not content with not giving an example of virtue, the villain also usurps the office of the demons, tempting, according to his power, his fellow-creatures to abandon virtue for vice; this is cruelty towards his neighbours, for he makes himself an instrument to destroy life and to give death. Cruelty towards the body has its origin in cupidity, which not only prevents a man from helping his neighbour, but causes him to seize the goods of others, robbing the poor creatures; sometimes this is done by the arbitrary use of power, and at other times by cheating and fraud, his neighbour being forced to redeem, to his own loss, his own goods, and often indeed his own person.

"Oh, miserable vice of cruelty, which will deprive the man who practises it of all mercy, unless he turn to kindness and benevolence towards his neighbour!

"Sometimes the sinner brings forth insults on which often follows murder; sometimes also impurity against the person of his neighbour, by which he becomes a brute beast full of stench, and in this case he does not poison one only, but whoever approaches him, with love or in conversation, is poisoned.

"Against whom does pride bring forth evils? Against the neighbour, through love of one's own reputation, whence comes hatred of the neighbour, reputing oneself to be greater than he; and in this way is injury done to him. And if a man be in a position of authority, he produces also injustice and cruelty and becomes a retailer of the flesh of men. Oh, dearest daughter, grieve for the offence against me, and weep over these corpses, so that, by prayer, the bands of their death may be loosened!

"See now that, in all places and in all kinds of people, sin is always produced against the neighbour, and through his medium; in no other way could sin ever be committed either secret or open. A secret sin is when you deprive your neighbour of that which you ought to give him; an open sin is where you perform positive acts of sin, as I have related to thee. It is, therefore, indeed the truth that every sin done against me, is done through the medium of the neighbour."

CHAPTER VII

How virtues are accomplished by means of our neighbour, and how it is that virtues differ to such an extent in creatures.

"I HAVE told thee how all sins are accomplished by means of thy neighbour, through the principles which I exposed to thee, that is, because men are deprived of the affection of love, which gives light to every virtue. In the same way self-love, which destroys charity and affection towards the neighbour, is the principle and foundation of every evil. All scandals, hatred, cruelty, and every sort of trouble proceed from this perverse root of self-love, which has poisoned the entire world, and weakened the mystical body of the holy Church, and the universal body of the believers in the Christian religion; and therefore I said to thee, that it was in the neighbour, that is to say in the love of him, that all virtues were founded; and truly indeed did I say to thee, that charity gives life to all the virtues,

because no virtue can be obtained without charity, which is the pure love of me.

"Wherefore, when the soul knows herself, as we have said above, she finds humility and hatred of her own sensual passion, for she learns the perverse law, which is bound up in her members, and which ever fights against the spirit. And therefore, arising with hatred of her own sensuality, crushing it under the heel of reason, with great earnestness, she discovers in herself the bounty of my goodness, through the many benefits which she has received from me, all of which she considers again in herself. She attributes to me, through humility, the knowledge which she has obtained of herself, knowing that, by my grace, I have drawn her out of darkness and lifted her up into the light of true knowledge. When she has recognised my goodness, she loves it without any medium, and yet at the same time with a medium, that is to say, without the medium of herself or of any advantage accruing to herself, and with the medium of virtue, which she has conceived through love of me, because she sees that in no other way can she become grateful and acceptable to me, but by conceiving hatred of sin and love of virtue; and when she has thus conceived by the affection of love, she immediately is delivered of fruit for her neighbour, because in no other way can she act out the truth she has conceived in herself, but loving me in truth, in the same truth she serves her neighbour.

"And it cannot be otherwise, because love of me and of her neighbour are one and the same thing, and so far as the soul loves me, she loves her neighbour, because love towards him issues from me. This is the means which I have given you, that you may exercise and prove your virtue therewith; because, inasmuch as you can do me no profit, you should do it to your neighbour. This proves that you possess me by grace in your soul, producing much fruit for your neighbour and making prayers to me, seeking with sweet and amorous desire my honour and the salvation of souls. The soul, enamoured of my truth, never ceases to serve the whole world in general, and more

or less in a particular case according to the disposition of the recipient and the ardent desire of the donor, as I have shown above, when I declared to thee that the endurance of suffering alone, without desire, was not sufficient to punish a fault.

"When she has discovered the advantage of this unitive love in me, by means of which she truly loves herself, extending her desire for the salvation of the whole world, thus coming to the aid of its neediness, she strives, inasmuch as she has done good to herself by the conception of virtue, from which she has drawn the life of grace, to fix her eye on the needs of her neighbour in particular. Wherefore, when she has discovered, through the affection of love, the state of all rational creatures in general, she helps those who are at hand, according to the various graces which I have entrusted to her to administer; one she helps with doctrine, that is, with words, giving sincere counsel without any respect of persons, another with the example of a good life, and this indeed all give to their neighbour, the edification of a holy and honourable life. These are the virtues, and many others, too many to enumerate, which are brought forth in the love of the neighbour; but, although I have given them in such a different way, that is to say, not all to one, but to one, one virtue, and to another, another, it so happens that it is impossible to have one without having them all, because all the virtues are bound together. Wherefore learn, that in many cases I give one virtue, to be as it were the chief of the others, that is to say, to one I will give principally love, to another justice, to another humility, to one a lively faith, to another prudence, or temperance, or patience, to another fortitude. These, and many other virtues, I place indifferently in the souls of many creatures; it happens, therefore, that the particular one so placed in the soul becomes the principal object of its virtue; the soul disposing herself, for her chief conversation, to this rather than to other virtues, and, by the effect of this virtue, the soul draws to herself all the other virtues, which, as has been said, are all bound together in the affection of love; and

so with many gifts and graces of virtue, and not only in the case of spiritual things but also of temporal. I use the word temporal for the things necessary to the physical life of man; all these I have given indifferently, and I have not placed them all in one soul, in order that man should, perforce, have material for love of his fellow. I could easily have created men possessed of all that they should need both for body and soul, but I wish that one should have need of the other, and that they should be my ministers to administer the graces and the gifts that they have received from me. Whether man will or no, he cannot help making an act of love. It is true, however, that that act, unless made through love of me, profits him nothing so far as grace is concerned. See then, that I have made men my ministers, and placed them in diverse stations and various ranks, in order that they may make use of the virtue of love.

"Wherefore, I show you that in my house are many mansions, and that I wish for no other thing than love, for in the love of me is fulfilled and completed the love of the neighbour, and the law observed. For he only can be of use in his state of life, who is bound to me with this love."

CHAPTER VIII

How virtues are proved and fortified by their contraries.

"Up to the present, I have taught thee how a man may serve his neighbour, and manifest, by that service, the love which he has towards me.

"Now I wish to tell thee further, that a man proves his patience on his neighbour, when he receives injuries from him.

"Similarly, he proves his humility on a proud man, his faith on an infidel, his true hope on one who despairs, his justice on the unjust, his kindness on the cruel, his gentleness and benignity on the irascible. Good men produce and prove all their virtues on their neighbour,

just as perverse men all their vices; thus, if thou consider well, humility is proved on pride in this way. The humble man extinguishes pride, because a proud man can do no harm to a humble one; neither can the infidelity of a wicked man, who neither loves me, nor hopes in me, when brought forth against one who is faithful to me, do him any harm; his infidelity does not diminish the faith or the hope of him who has conceived his faith and hope through love of me; it rather fortifies it, and proves it in the love he feels for his neighbour. For he sees that the infidel is unfaithful, because he is without hope in me, and in my servant, because he does not love me, placing his faith and hope rather in his own sensuality, which is all that he loves. My faithful servant does not leave him because he does not faithfully love me, or because he does not constantly seek, with hope in me, for his salvation, inasmuch as he sees clearly the causes of his infidelity and lack of hope. The virtue of faith is proved in these and other ways. Wherefore, to those who need the proof of it, my servant proves his faith in himself and in his neighbour, and so, justice is not diminished by the wicked man's injustice, but is rather proved, that is to say, the justice of a just man. Similarly, the virtues of patience, benignity, and kindness manifest themselves in a time of wrath by the same sweet patience in my servants, and envy, vexation and hatred demonstrate their love, and hunger and desire for the salvation of souls. I say also to thee, that not only is virtue proved in those who render good for evil, but that many times a good man gives back fiery coals of love, which dispel the hatred and rancour of heart of the angry, and so from hatred often comes benevolence, and that this is by virtue of the love and perfect patience which is in him, who sustains the anger of the wicked, bearing and supporting his defects. If thou wilt observe the virtues of fortitude and perseverance, these virtues are proved by the long endurance of the injuries and detractions of wicked men, who, whether by injuries or by flattery, constantly endeavour to turn a man aside from following the road and the doctrine of truth. Wherefore,

in all these things, the virtue of fortitude conceived within the soul perseveres with strength, and in addition proves itself externally upon the neighbour, as I have said to thee; and if fortitude were not able to make that good proof of itself, being tested by many contrarieties, it would not be a serious virtue founded in truth."

A TREATISE OF DISCRETION

CHAPTER IX

How the affection should not place reliance chiefly on penance, but rather on virtues; and how discretion receives life from humility, and renders to each man his due.

"THESE are the holy and sweet works which I seek from my servants; these are the proved intrinsic virtues of the soul, as I have told thee. They not only consist of those virtues which are done by means of the body, that is, with an exterior act, or with diverse and varied penances, which are the instruments of virtue; works of penance performed alone without the above-mentioned virtues would please me little; often, indeed, if the soul perform not her penance with discretion, that is to say, if her affection be placed principally in the penance she has undertaken, her perfection will be impeded; she should rather place reliance on the affection of love, with a holy hatred of herself, accompanied by true humility and perfect patience, together with the other intrinsic virtues of the soul, with hunger and desire for my honour and the salvation of souls. For these virtues demonstrate that the will is dead, and continually slays its own sensuality through the affection of love of virtue. With this discretion, then, should the soul perform her penance, that is, she should place her principal affection in virtue rather than in penance. Penance should be but the means to increase virtue according to the needs of the individual, and according to what the soul sees she can do in the measure of her own possibility. Otherwise, if the soul place her foundation on penance she will contaminate her own perfection, because her penance will not be done in the light of knowledge of herself and of my goodness, with discretion, and she will not seize hold of my truth; neither loving that which I love, nor hating that which I hate. This virtue of discretion is no other than

a true knowledge which the soul should have of herself and of me, and in this knowledge is virtue rooted. Discretion is the only child of self-knowledge, and, wedding with charity, has indeed many other descendants, as a tree which has many branches; but that which gives life to the tree, to its branches, and its root, is the ground of humility, in which it is planted, which humility is the foster-mother and nurse of charity, by whose means this tree remains in the perpetual calm of discretion. Because otherwise the tree would not produce the virtue of discretion, or any fruit of life, if it were not planted in the virtue of humility, because humility proceeds from self-knowledge. And I have already said to thee, that the root of discretion is a real knowledge of self and of my goodness, by which the soul immediately and discreetly renders to each one his due. Chiefly to me in rendering praise and glory to my name, and in referring to me the graces and the gifts which she sees and knows she has received from me; and rendering to herself that which she sees herself to have merited, knowing that she does not even exist of herself, and attributing to me, and not to herself, her being, which she knows she has received by grace from me, and every other grace which she has received besides.

"And she seems to herself to be ungrateful for so many benefits, and negligent, in that she has not made the most of her time, and the graces she has received, and so seems to herself worthy of suffering; wherefore she becomes odious and displeasing to herself through her guilt. And this founds the virtue of discretion on knowledge of self, that is, on true humility, for, were this humility not in the soul, the soul would be indiscreet, indiscretion being founded on pride, as discretion is on humility.

"An indiscreet soul robs me of the honour due to me, and attributes it to herself, through vainglory, and that which is really her own she imputes to me, grieving and murmuring concerning my mysteries, with which I work in her soul and in those of my other creatures; wherefore everything in me and in her neighbour is cause of scandal to her. Contrariwise those who possess the virtue of dis-

cretion. For when they have rendered what is due to me and to themselves, they proceed to render to their neighbour their principal debt of love, and of humble and continuous prayer, which all should pay to each other, and further, the debt of doctrine, and example of a holy and honourable life, counselling and helping others according to their needs for salvation, as I said to thee above. Whatever rank a man be in, whether that of a noble, a prelate, or a servant, if he have this virtue, everything that he does to his neighbour is done discreetly and lovingly, because these virtues are bound and mingled together, and both planted in the ground of humility which proceeds from self-knowledge."

CHAPTER X

A parable showing how love, humility, and discretion are united; and how the soul should conform herself to this parable.

"DOST thou know how these three virtues stand together? It is, as if a circle were drawn on the surface of the earth, and a tree, with an off-shoot joined to its side, grew in the centre of the circle. The tree is nourished in the earth contained in the diameter of the circle, for if the tree were out of the earth it would die, and give no fruit. Now, consider, in the same way, that the soul is a tree existing by love, and that it can live by nothing else than love; and that, if this soul have not in very truth the divine love of perfect charity, she cannot produce fruit of life, but only of death. It is necessary, then, that the root of this tree, that is, the affection of the soul, should grow in, and issue from the circle of true self-knowledge which is contained in me, who have neither beginning nor end, like the circumference of the circle, for, turn as thou wilt within a circle, inasmuch as the circumference has neither end nor beginning, thou always remainest within it.

"This knowledge of thyself and of me is found in the earth of true humility, which is as wide as the diameter of the circle, that is, as the knowledge of self and of me (for

otherwise the circle would not be without end and beginning, but would have its beginning in knowledge of self, and its end in confusion, if this knowledge were not contained in me). Then the tree of love feeds itself on humility, bringing forth from its side the off-shoot of true discretion, in the way that I have already told thee, from the heart of the tree, that is, the affection of love which is in the soul, and the patience, which proves that I am in the soul and the soul in me. This tree then, so sweetly planted, produces fragrant blossoms of virtue, with many scents of great variety, inasmuch as the soul renders fruit of grace and of utility to her neighbour, according to the zeal of those who come to receive fruit from my servants; and to me she renders the sweet odour of glory and praise to my name, and so fulfils the object of her creation.

"In this way, therefore, she reaches the term of her being, that is, myself, her God, who am Eternal Life. And these fruits cannot be taken from her without her will, inasmuch as they are all flavoured with discretion, because they are all united, as has been said above."

CHAPTER XI

How penance and other corporal exercises are to be taken as instruments for arriving at virtue, and not as the principal affection of the soul; and of the light of discretion in various other modes and operations.

"THESE are the fruits and the works which I seek from the soul, and proving, namely, of virtue in the time of need. And yet some time ago, if thou remember, when thou wert desirous of doing great penance for my sake, asking, 'What can I do to endure suffering for thee, O Lord?' I replied to thee, speaking in thy mind, 'I take delight in few words and many works.' I wished to show thee that he who merely calls on me with the sound of words, saying: 'Lord, Lord, I would do something for thee,' and he who desires for my sake to mortify his body with many penances, and not his own will, did not give me much

pleasure; but that I desired the manifold works of manly endurance with patience, together with the other virtues, which I have mentioned to thee above, intrinsic to the soul, all of which must be in activity in order to obtain fruits worthy of grace. All other works, founded on any other principle than this, I judge to be a mere calling with words, because they are finite works, and I, who am Infinite, seek infinite works, that is, an infinite perfection of love.

"I wish therefore that the works of penance, and of other corporal exercises, should be observed merely as means, and not as the fundamental affection of the soul. For if the principal affection of the soul were placed in penance, I should receive a finite thing like a word, which, when it has issued from the mouth, is no more, unless it have issued with affection of the soul, which conceives and brings forth virtue in truth; that is, unless the finite operation, which I have called a word, should be joined with the affection or love, in which case it would be grateful and pleasant to me. And this is because such a work would not be alone, but accompanied by true discretion, using corporal works as means, and not as the principal foundation; for it would not be becoming that that principal foundation should be placed in penance only, or in any exterior corporal act, such works being finite, since they are done in finite time, and also because it is often profitable that the creature omit them, and even that she be made to do so.

"Wherefore, when the soul omits them through necessity, being unable through various circumstances to complete an action which she has begun, or, as may frequently happen, through obedience at the order of her director, it is well; since, if she continued then to do them, she not only would receive no merit, but would offend me; thus thou seest that they are merely finite. She ought, therefore, to adopt them as a means, and not as an end. For if she takes them as an end she will be obliged, some time or other, to leave them, and will then remain empty. This my trumpeter, the glorious Paul, taught you when

he said in his epistle, that you should mortify the body and destroy self-will, knowing, that is to say, how to keep the rein on the body, macerating the flesh whenever it should wish to combat the spirit, but the will should be dead and annihilated in everything, and subject to my will, and this slaying of the will is that due which, as I told thee, the virtue of discretion renders to the soul, that is to say, hatred and disgust of her own offences and sensuality, which are acquired by self-knowledge. This is the knife which slays and cuts off all self-love founded in self-will. These then are they who give me not only words but manifold works, and in these I take delight. And then I said that I desired few words, and many actions; by the use of the word 'many' I assign no particular number to thee, because the affection of the soul, founded in love, which gives life to all the virtues and good works, should increase infinitely, and yet I do not, by this, exclude words, I merely said that I wished few of them, showing thee that every actual operation, as such, was finite, and therefore I called them of little account; but they please me when they are performed as the instruments of virtue, and not as a principal end in themselves.

"However, no one should judge that he has greater perfection, because he performs great penances, and gives himself in excess to the slaying of his body, than he who does less, inasmuch as neither virtue nor merit consists therein; for otherwise he would be in an evil case who, from some legitimate reason, was unable to do actual penance. Merit consists in the virtue of love alone, flavoured with the light of true discretion, without which the soul is worth nothing. And this love should be directed to me endlessly, boundlessly, since I am the Supreme and Eternal Truth. The soul can therefore place neither laws nor limits to her love for me; but her love for her neighbour, on the contrary, is ordered in certain conditions. The light of discretion (which proceeds from love, as I have told thee) gives to the neighbour a conditioned love, one that, being ordered aright, does not cause the injury of sin to self in order to be useful to

others, for if one single sin were committed to save the whole world from hell, or to obtain one great virtue, the motive would not be a rightly ordered or discreet love, but rather indiscreet, for it is not lawful to perform even one act of great virtue and profit to others, by means of the guilt of sin. Holy discretion ordains that the soul should direct all her powers to my service with a manly zeal, and, that she should love her neighbour with such devotion that she would lay down a thousand times, if it were possible, the life of her body for the salvation of souls, enduring pains and torments so that her neighbour may have the life of grace, and giving her temporal substance for the profit and relief of his body.

"This is the supreme office of discretion which proceeds from charity. So thou seest how discreetly every soul who wishes for grace should pay her debts, that is, should love me with an infinite love and without measure, but her neighbour with measure, with a restricted love, as I have said, not doing herself the injury of sin in order to be useful to others. This is St Paul's counsel to thee when he says that charity ought to be concerned first with self, otherwise it will never be of perfect utility to others. Because, when perfection is not in the soul, everything which the soul does for itself and for others is imperfect. It would not, therefore, be just that creatures, who are finite and created by me, should be saved through offence done to me, who am the Infinite Good. The more serious the fault is in such a case, the less fruit will the action produce; therefore in no way shouldest thou ever incur the guilt of sin.

"And this true love knows well, because she carries with herself the light of holy discretion, that light which dissipates all darkness, takes away ignorance, and is the condiment of every instrument of virtue. Holy discretion is a prudence which cannot be cheated, a fortitude which cannot be beaten, a perseverance from end to end, stretching from heaven to earth, that is, from knowledge of me to knowledge of self, and from love of me to love of others. And the soul escapes dangers by her true humility, and

by her prudence flies all the nets of the world and its creatures, and with unarmed hands, that is, through much endurance, discomfits the devil and the flesh with this sweet and glorious light; knowing, by it, her own fragility, she renders to her weakness its due of hatred.

"Wherefore she has trampled on the world, and placed it under the feet of her affection, despising it, and holding it vile, and thus becoming lord of it, holding it as folly. And the men of the world cannot take her virtues from such a soul, but all their persecutions increase her virtues and prove them, which virtues have been at first conceived by the virtue of love, as has been said, and then are proved on her neighbour, and bring forth their fruit on him. Thus have I shown thee, that if virtue were not visible and did not shine in the time of trial, it would not have been truly conceived; for I have already told thee, that perfect virtue cannot exist and give fruit except by means of the neighbour, even as a woman who has conceived a child, if she do not bring it forth, so that it may appear before the eyes of men, deprives her husband of his fame of paternity. It is the same with me, who am the Spouse of the soul, if she do not produce the child of virtue, in the love of her neighbour, showing her child to him who is in need, both in general and in particular, as I have said to thee before, so I declare now that, in truth, she has not conceived virtue at all, and this is also true of the vices, all of which are committed by means of the neighbour."

CHAPTER XII

A repetition of several things already said, and how God promises refreshments to his servants, and the reformation of the holy Church, together with the means of much endurance.

"Now thou seest that I, the Truth, have spoken truth to thee, and have given thee the doctrine by which thou mayest attain and preserve great perfection; and I have also declared to thee in what way satisfaction is made,

both for the guilt and the penalty, in thyself and in thy neighbour, saying to thee that the sufferings sustained by the creature, while in the mortal body, are not of themselves a sufficient expiation for the fault and the pain due to it, unless they are combined with the affection of love, and true contrition and displeasure of sin; for when suffering is combined with love, it satisfies, not by virtue of the actual suffering endured, but by virtue of the love and the grief for sin committed, which love is obtained by the light of the intellect, with a pure and generous heart gazing at me, as its object, who am Love itself. All this I have shown thee because thou didst ask me if thou couldst suffer for my glory. And I have shown this to thee, in order that thou and my other servants may know how you should sacrifice yourselves to me. In your sacrifice, I say, both act and thought should be united; as a vessel which is presented to the Lord is united with the water it contains, for the water could not be presented without the vessel, and the vessel would not be pleasing to him if it did not contain the water. So I say to you, that you ought to offer to me the vessel of many fatiguing actions, in whatever way I send them to you, choosing, after your own fashion, neither place, nor time, nor actions. Therefore the vessel should be full, that is, you should endure all those fatigues with affection of love and true patience, supporting the defects of your neighbour, with hatred and displeasure of sin. If you do so, these labours which I have given you become a grateful vessel, full of the water of my grace which gives life to the soul, and then I receive this gift from my sweet spouses, that is, from every soul who serves me well. I receive her anxieties, her desires, her tears, her humble sighs, and her continual prayers; all of which things are a means by which, through love, I appease my wrath against my enemies, the men of iniquity who so greatly offend me. So, endure manfully, even unto death, and this will be a sign to me that you love me; and you should not turn your faces away and look askance at the plough, through fear of any creature or of any tribulation; rather, in such tribulations should you rejoice.

The world rejoices in doing you many injuries, and you are saddened on account of the injuries done in the world, and the offences which you see done against yourselves, which offend both you and me, because I have become one thing with you. Thou seest truly, that I, having originally given you my image and similitude, and you, having lost my grace through sin, in order to restore to you that life of grace, I united my nature to you, covering it with the veil of your humanity, and thus, while you, by creation, possessed my image, I took your image in taking the human form. I am therefore one thing with you, if indeed the soul do not leave me through the guilt of mortal sin; but he who loves me, remains in me, and I in him, and yet the world persecutes him, because the world has no conformity with me, and in the same way persecuted my only-begotten Son, even to the shameful death of the cross. It does the same to you, it persecutes and will persecute you even unto death, because it loves me not, for if the world had loved me, it would also have loved you; but rejoice, because your joy will be great in heaven. I also say to thee, that as the mystical body of the Church abounds now in tribulation, so shall it one day abound all the more in sweetness and consolation, and this shall be its sweetness—the reformation produced by holy and good pastors, who are flowers of glory; for they render glory and praise to my name, rendering to me the sweet odours of virtues founded on truth. The reformation concerns those odoriferous flowers, my ministers and pastors, not the fruit of my spouse, which never needs to be reformed, because it neither diminishes nor is hurt by the defects of my ministers.

"So do thou rejoice, and the spiritual father of thy soul, and my other servants, in the bitterness of your sorrow, because, in my Eternal Truth, I have promised to give you refreshment, and after your sorrow I will give you most sustaining consolation, with much substance in the reformation of the holy Church."

CHAPTER XIII

How this soul grew by means of the divine response, and how her sorrows grew less, and how she prayed to God for the holy Church, and for her own people.

"THEN that soul, thirsting and burning with the very great desire that she had conceived on learning the ineffable love of God, shown in his great goodness, and, seeing the breadth of his charity, that with such sweetness he had deigned to reply to her request and to satisfy it, giving hope to the sorrow which she had conceived, on account of offences against God, and the damage of the holy Church, and through his own mercy, which she saw through self-knowledge, diminished, and yet at the same time increased her sorrow.

"For the Supreme and Eternal Father, in manifesting the way of perfection, showed her anew her own guilt, and the loss of souls, as has been said more fully above. Also, because in the knowledge which the soul obtains of herself, she knows more of God, and knowing the goodness of God in herself, the sweet mirror of God, she knows her own dignity and indignity. Her dignity is that of her creation, seeing that she is the image of God, and this has been given her by grace, and not as her due. In that same mirror of the goodness of God, the soul knows her own indignity, which is the consequence of her own fault. Wherefore, as a man more readily sees spots on his face when he looks in a mirror, so the soul, who with true knowledge of self rises with desire, and gazes with the eye of the intellect at herself in the sweet mirror of God, knows better the stains of her own face, by the purity which she sees in him.

"Wherefore, because light and knowledge increased in that soul in the aforesaid way, a sweet sorrow grew in her, and, at the same time, her sorrow was diminished by the hope which the Supreme Truth gave her, and, as fire grows when it is fed with wood, so grew the fire in that soul to such an extent that it was no longer possible for the body

to endure it without the departure of the soul; so that, had she not been surrounded by the strength of him who is the Supreme Strength, it would not have been possible for her to have lived any longer. This soul, then, being purified by the fire of divine love, which she found in the knowledge of herself and of God, and her hunger for the salvation of the whole world, and for the reformation of the holy Church, having grown with her hope of obtaining the same, rose with confidence before the Supreme Father, showing him the leprosy of the holy Church, and the misery of the world, saying, as if with the words of Moses: 'My Lord, turn the eyes of thy mercy upon thy people, and upon the mystical body of the holy Church, for thou wilt be the more glorified if thou pardonest so many creatures, and givest to them the light of knowledge, since all will render thee praise when they see themselves escape through thy infinite goodness from the clouds of mortal sin, and from eternal damnation; and then thou wilt not only be praised by my wretched self, who have so much offended thee, and who am the cause and the instrument of all this evil, for which reason I pray thy divine and eternal love to take thy revenge on me, and to do mercy to thy people, and never will I depart from before thy presence until I see that thou grantest them mercy. For what is it to me if I have life, and thy people death, and the clouds of darkness cover thy spouse, when it is my own sins, and not those of thy other creatures, that are the principal cause of this? I desire, then, and beg of thee, by thy grace, that thou have mercy on thy people, and I adjure thee that thou do this by thy uncreated love which moved thee thyself to create man in thy image and similitude, saying, "Let us make man in our own image," and this thou didst, O Eternal Trinity, that man might participate in everything belonging to thee, the most high and eternal Trinity.'

"Wherefore thou gavest him memory in order to receive thy benefits, by which he participates in the power of the Eternal Father; and intellect that he might know, seeing thy goodness, and so might participate in the wisdom of

thine only-begotten Son; and will, that he might love that which his intellect has seen and known of thy truth, thus participating in the clemency of thy Holy Spirit. What reason hadst thou for creating man in such dignity? The inestimable love with which thou sawest thy creature in thyself, and didst become enamoured of him, for thou didst create him through love, and didst destine him to be such that he might taste and enjoy thy Eternal Good. I see therefore that through his sin he lost this dignity in which thou didst originally place him, and by his rebellion against thee, fell into a state of war with thy kindness, that is to say, we all became thy enemies.

"Therefore thou, moved by that same fire of love with which thou didst create him, didst willingly give man a means of reconciliation, so that after the great rebellion into which he had fallen, there should come a great peace; and so thou didst give him the only-begotten Word, thy Son, to be the Mediator between us and thee. He was our Justice, for he took on himself all our offences and injustices, and performed thy obedience, Eternal Father, which thou didst impose on him, when thou didst clothe him with our humanity, our human nature and likeness. Oh, abyss of love! What heart can help breaking when it sees such dignity as thine descend to such lowliness as our humanity? We are thy image, and thou hast become ours, by this union which thou hast accomplished with man, veiling the Eternal Deity with the cloud of woe, and the corrupted clay of Adam. For what reason?—Love. Wherefore thou, O God, hast become man, and man has become God. By this ineffable love of thine, therefore, I constrain thee, and implore thee that thou do mercy to thy creatures."

CHAPTER XIV

How God grieves over the Christian people, and particularly over his ministers; and touches on the subject of the Sacrament of Christ's Body, and the benefit of the Incarnation.

THEN God, turning the eye of his mercy towards her, allowing himself to be constrained by her tears, and bound by the chain of her holy desire, replied with lamentation—"My sweetest daughter, thy tears constrain me, because they are joined with my love, and fall for love of me, and thy painful desires force me to answer thee; but marvel, and see how my spouse has defiled her face, and become leprous, on account of her filthiness and self-love, and swollen with the pride and avarice of those who feed on their own sin.

"What I say of the universal body and the mystical body of the holy Church (that is to say, the Christian religion) I also say of my ministers, who stand and feed at the breasts of holy Church; and not only should they feed themselves, but it is also their duty to feed and hold to those breasts the universal body of Christian people, and also any other people who should wish to leave the darkness of their infidelity, and bind themselves as members to my Church. See then with what ignorance and darkness and ingratitude are administered, and with what filthy hands are handled this glorious milk and blood of my spouse, and with what presumption and irreverence they are received. Wherefore, that which really gives life, often gives, through the defects of those who receive it, death; that is to say, the precious blood of my only-begotten Son, which destroyed death and darkness, and gave life and truth, and confounded falsehood. For I give this blood and use it for salvation and perfection in the case of that man who disposes himself properly to receive it, for it gives life and adorns the soul with every grace, in proportion to the disposition and affection of him who receives it; similarly it gives death to him who receives it unworthily, living in iniquity and in the darkness of mortal sin; to

him, I say, it gives death and not life; not through defect of the blood, nor through defect of the minister, though there might be great evil in him, because his evil would not spoil nor defile the blood nor diminish its grace and virtue, nor does an evil minister do harm to him to whom he gives the blood, but to himself he does the harm of guilt, which will be followed by punishment, unless he correct himself with contrition and repentance. I say then that the blood does harm to him who receives it unworthily, not through defect of the blood, nor of the minister, but through his own evil disposition and defect inasmuch as he has befouled his mind and body with such impurity and misery, and has been so cruel to himself and his neighbour. He has used cruelty to himself, depriving himself of grace, trampling under the feet of his affection the fruit of the blood which he had received in Holy Baptism, when the stain of original sin was taken from him by virtue of the blood, which stain he drew from his origin, when he was generated by his father and mother.

"Wherefore I gave my Word, my only-begotten Son, because the whole stuff of human generation was corrupted through the sin of the first man Adam. Wherefore, all of you, vessels made of this stuff, were corrupted and not disposed to the possession of eternal life—so I, with my dignity, joined myself to the baseness of your human generation, in order to restore it to grace which you had lost by sin; for I was incapable of suffering, and yet, on account of guilt, my divine justice demanded suffering. But man was not sufficient to satisfy it, for even if he had satisfied to a certain extent, he could only have satisfied for himself, and not for other rational creatures, besides which, neither for himself nor for others could man satisfy, his sin having been committed against me, who am the Infinite Good. Wishing, however, to restore man, who was enfeebled, and could not satisfy for the above reason, I sent my Word, my own Son, clothed in your own very nature, the corrupted clay of Adam, in order that he might endure suffering in that selfsame nature in which man had offended, suffering in his body even to the oppro-

brious death of the cross, and so he satisfied my justice and my divine mercy. For my mercy willed to make satisfaction for the sin of man and to dispose him to that good for which I had created him. This human nature, joined with the divine nature, was sufficient to satisfy for the whole human race, not only on account of the pain which it sustained in its finite nature, that is, in the flesh of Adam, but by virtue of the Eternal Deity, the divine and infinite nature joined to it. The two natures being thus joined together, I received and accepted the sacrifice of my only-begotten Son, kneaded into one dough with the divine nature, by the fire of divine love which was the fetter which held him fastened and nailed to the cross in this way. Thus human nature was sufficient to satisfy for guilt, but only by virtue of the divine nature. And in this way was destroyed the stain of Adam's sin, only the mark of it remaining behind, that is, an inclination to sin, and to every sort of corporeal defect, like the cicatrice which remains when a man is healed of a wound. In this way the original fault of Adam was able still to cause a fatal stain; wherefore the coming of the great Physician, that is to say, of my only-begotten Son, cured this invalid, he drinking this bitter medicine, which man could not drink on account of his great weakness, like a foster-mother who takes medicine instead of her suckling, because she is grown up and strong, and the child is not fit to endure its bitterness. He was man's foster-mother, enduring, with the greatness and strength of the Deity united with your nature, the bitter medicine of the painful death of the cross, to give life to you little ones debilitated by guilt. I say therefore that the mark alone of original sin remains, which sin you take from your father and your mother when you are generated by them. But this mark is removed from the soul, though not altogether, by Holy Baptism, which has the virtue of communicating the life of grace by means of that glorious and precious blood. Wherefore, at the moment that the soul receives Holy Baptism, original sin is taken away from her, and grace is infused into her, and that inclination to sin, which remains from the original

corruption, as has been said, is indeed a source of weakness, but the soul can keep the bridle on it if she choose. Then the vessel of the soul is disposed to receive and increase in herself grace, more or less, according as it pleases her to dispose herself willingly with affection, and desire of loving and serving me; and in the same way she can dispose herself to evil as to good, in spite of her having received grace in Holy Baptism. Wherefore when the time of discretion is come, the soul can, by her free will, make choice either of good or evil, according as it pleases her will; and so great is this liberty that man has, and so strong has this liberty been made by virtue of this glorious blood, that no demon or creature can constrain him to one smallest fault without his free consent. He has been redeemed from slavery, and made free in order that he might govern his own sensuality, and obtain the end for which he was created. Oh, miserable man, who delights to remain in the mud like a brute, and does not learn this great benefit which he has received from me! A benefit so great, that the poor wretched creature full of such ignorance could receive no greater."

CHAPTER XV

How sin is more gravely punished after the Passion of Christ than before; and how God promises to do mercy to the world, and to the holy Church, by means of the prayers and sufferings of his servants.

"AND I wish thee to know, my daughter, that, although I have re-created and restored to the life of grace the human race, through the blood of my only-begotten Son, as I have said, men are not grateful, but, going from bad to worse, and from guilt to guilt, even persecuting me with many injuries, taking so little account of the graces which I have given them and continue to give them, that not only do they not attribute what they have received to grace, but seem to themselves on occasion to receive

injuries from me, as if I desired anything else than their sanctification.

"I say to thee that they will be more hard-hearted, and worthy of more punishment, and will, indeed, be punished more severely, now that they have received redemption in the blood of my Son, than they would have been before that redemption took place—that is, before the stain of Adam's sin had been taken away. It is right that he who receives more should render more, and should be under greater obligations to him from whom he receives more.

"Man, then, was closely bound to me through his being which I had given him, creating him in my own image and similitude; for which reason, he was bound to render me glory, but he deprived me of it, and wished to give it to himself. Thus he came to transgress my obedience imposed on him, and became my enemy. And I, with my humility, destroyed his pride, humiliating the divine nature, and taking your humanity, and, freeing you from the service of the devil, I made you free. And not only did I give you liberty, but, if you examine, you will see that man has become God, and God has become man, through the union of the divine with the human nature. This is the debt which they have incurred—that is to say, the treasure of the blood, by which they have been procreated to grace. See, therefore, how much more they owe after the redemption than before. For they are now obliged to render me glory and praise by following in the steps of my Incarnate Word, my only-begotten Son, for then they repay me the debt of love both of myself and of their neighbour, with true and genuine virtue, as I have said to thee above, and if they do not do it, the greater their debt, the greater will be the offence they fall into, and therefore, by divine justice, the greater their suffering in eternal damnation.

"A false Christian is punished more than a pagan, and the deathless fire of divine justice consumes him more, that is, afflicts him more, and, in his affliction, he feels himself being consumed by the worm of conscience, though, in truth, he is not consumed, because the damned do not

lose their being through any torment which they receive. Wherefore I say to thee, that they ask for death and cannot have it, for they cannot lose their being; the existence of grace they lose, through their fault, but not their natural existence. Therefore guilt is more gravely punished after the redemption of the blood than before, because man received more; but sinners neither seem to perceive this, nor to pay any attention to their own sins, and so become my enemies, though I have reconciled them by means of the blood of my Son. But there is a remedy with which I appease my wrath—that is to say, by means of my servants, if they are jealous to constrain me by their desire. Thou seest, therefore, that thou hast bound me with this bond which I have given thee, because I wished to do mercy to the world.

"Therefore I give my servants hunger and desire for my honour, and the salvation of souls, so that, constrained by their tears, I may mitigate the fury of my divine justice. Take, therefore, thy tears and thy sweat, drawn from the fountain of my divine love, and with them wash the face of my spouse.

"I promise thee that, by this means, her beauty will be restored to her, not by the knife nor by cruelty, but peacefully, by humble and continued prayer, by the sweat and the tears shed by the fiery desire of my servants, and thus will I fulfil thy desire if thou, on thy part, endure much, casting the light of thy patience into the darkness of perverse man, not fearing the world's persecutions, for I will protect thee, and my providence shall never fail thee in the slightest need."

CHAPTER XVI

How this soul, knowing the divine goodness, did not remain content to pray only for Christians, but prayed in general for the whole world.

THEN that soul (rising on the wings of greater knowledge, and standing before the divine majesty with very great joy and comfort, both through the hope which she had received

of the divine mercy, and the ineffable love which she had tasted, seeing that God, on account of his love and desire to do mercy to men, in spite of their being his enemies, had given the means and the way to his servants to constrain his own goodness, and appease his anger), rejoiced, losing all fear of the persecutions of the world, seeing that God was on her side, and the fire of her holy desire grew greatly, so that she could not remain content, but, with holy confidence, begged for mercy for the whole world. And although in this, her second prayer, she asked for the good and profit of Christians and of the faithful, that is to say for the reformation of holy Church, nevertheless, in her hunger, she spread her prayer over the whole world, as if the world itself caused her to pray, crying: "O Eternal God! Give mercy to thy lambs, like the Good Shepherd that thou art. Do not delay thy mercy to the world, because it seems to be hardly able to exist any longer without it, but to be entirely deprived of the union of love with thee, the Eternal Truth; and men seem equally deprived of love towards each other, for they do not love each other with a love founded in thee."

CHAPTER XVII

How God laments over his rational creatures, principally on account of the self-love which reigns in them; strengthening the above mentioned soul for greater efforts of prayer and tears.

THEN God, all inflamed with love for our salvation, took means to light up a greater love and a greater grief in that soul, showing, in the following way, with what love he had created man, of which something has been said above.

And he said: "Dost thou not see how every man persecutes me? and yet I have created him with such a fire of love, and given him grace and mercy, infinite gifts, through my free grace and not of his own due. See then, my daughter, with how many and diverse sins they persecute me, and especially with their miserable self-love,

from which proceeds every evil. With this self-love they have poisoned the whole world, for, just as the love of me contains in itself every virtue brought forth upon their neighbour, as I have shown thee, so sensual self-love, since it proceeds from pride (and love of me proceeds from charity) contains in itself every evil; and these evils they perform by means of creatures, being separated and divided from love of their neighbour, since, not loving me, they do not love him either, for these two loves are joined together, and therefore I said to thee above, that all good and all evil was done by means of the neighbour. I have therefore much to grieve over in man, who from me has received nothing but good, and yet renders me hatred, working every sort of iniquity. This I have said to thee, in order that, through the tears of my servants, I might mitigate my wrath. Therefore do you, my servants, prepare yourselves before me with many prayers and anxious desires, and with grief for the sin which is done against me and for the damnation of souls. And so will you mitigate the wrath of divine justice."

CHAPTER XVIII

How no man can escape from the hands of God, for God visits him either in mercy or in justice.

"AND know, my dearest daughter, that no one can escape from my hands, for I Am Who Am, and you are not in yourselves, but only in so far as you act through me, who am the creator of all things which share the gift of being, except sin, which is nothing, and therefore not made by me, and, inasmuch as it is not found in me, it is not worthy of being loved. For this reason the creature sins and offends, because she loves that which she ought not to love, namely sin, and hates me, whom she is obliged and bound to love, because I am the Supreme Good, and have given her being with such fire of love. Outside of me souls cannot go, because they are either in me through justice for their

sins, or through mercy. Open thou the eye of thine intellect to gaze into my hand, and thou wilt see that the truth is as I have said to thee."

Then she, lifting her eyes, in obedience to the Supreme Father, saw, clenched in the hollow of his hand, the whole universe, and God said to her: "My daughter, see now and learn that no one can be taken from me; for all who are here, are here through justice or through mercy, as I have said; for they are mine, and created by me, and I love them ineffably; and yet, in spite of their iniquity, I will do them mercy, by means of my servants, and will grant the petition which, with such grief and love, thou hast asked of me."

CHAPTER XIX

How this soul, growing in amorous heat, yearned to sweat blood; and, accusing herself, made a particular prayer for the spiritual father of her soul.

THEN that soul, as if dumb and beside herself through the increasing fire of her holy desire, remained both blessed and sorrowful.

She was blessed through the union which she had with God, tasting joy and goodness, being wholly immersed in his mercy. And she was sorrowful, seeing such goodness offended; and she rendered thanks to the divine majesty, knowing that God had manifested to her the defects of his creatures, in order that she should be constrained to exert herself with greater desire and anxiety for their salvation, and this feeling for souls was so renewed in her, and this holy and amorous fire grew to such a pitch, that she desired that the sweat of water, cast out of her by the violence done to her body by her soul, should be a sweat of blood. She thus sweated, through the force and heat of love, because the union which her soul had with God was more perfect than the union of her soul with her body; but she despised it through the great desire which she had to see a sweat of blood issue from her body, saying to

herself: "O my soul! thou hast lost all the time of thy life, and yet so many evils and troubles have come upon the world, and the holy Church, both in general and in particular; and I will, therefore, that thou bear remedy to these evils with a sweat of blood."

In truth this soul had well taken to heart the doctrine which the Truth had taught her, namely, ever to know herself and the goodness of God in her, and the remedy with which she should try and heal the whole world, and appease the wrath of God and his divine justice, that is, humble, continuous and holy prayer.

Then this soul, cast prone by holy desire, arose, opening far wider the eye of the intellect, gazing on herself in the divine love, when she saw and tasted how we are bound by love to seek the glory and the praise of God in the salvation of souls.

And she saw the servants of God to be called to this, and that the Eternal Truth particularly called and elected the spiritual father of her soul. This spiritual father she carried before the Divine Goodness, praying that it would shed on him a ray of grace, so that he might truly follow the Truth itself.

CHAPTER XX

How, without enduring tribulations with patience, it is impossible to please God; and how God comforts her and her spiritual father to endure with true patience.

THEN God, replying to her third petition (namely, the prayer of her hunger for the salvation of the spiritual father of her soul), said:

"Daughter, this is what I wish him to seek, namely, to please me, the Truth, in the hunger which he has for the salvation of souls with all solicitude. But this he could not have, neither he, nor thou, nor anyone else, without many troubles, as I said to thee above, according to the measure in which I give them you. Wherefore, if thou desire to see my honour in the holy Church, thou

oughtest so to love as to wish to endure with true patience; and by this I shall see that he and thou and my other servants seek my honour in truth. Then he will become my dearest son, and will repose himself and others upon the breast of my only-begotten Son, whom I have made the Bridge by which you may all arrive at your end, and receive the fruit of all your labours which you have endured for the love of me. Bear yourselves then manfully."

CHAPTER XXI

How the road to heaven being broken through the disobedience of Adam, God made of his Son a Bridge by which man could pass.

"WHEREFORE I have told thee that I have made a Bridge of my Word, of my only-begotten Son, and this is the truth. I wish that you, my children, should know that the road was broken by the sin and disobedience of Adam, in such a way that no one could arrive at eternal life. Wherefore men did not render me glory in the way in which they ought to have, as they did not participate in that good for which I had created them, and my truth was not fulfilled. This truth is that I have created man to my own image and similitude, in order that he might have eternal life, and might partake of me, and taste my supreme and eternal sweetness and goodness. But, after sin had closed heaven and bolted the doors of mercy, the soul of man produced thorns and prickly brambles, and my creature found in himself rebellion against himself.

"And the flesh immediately began to war against the spirit, and, losing the state of innocency, became a foul animal, and all created things rebelled against man, whereas they would have been obedient to him, had he remained in the state in which I had placed him. He, not remaining therein, transgressed my obedience, and merited eternal death in soul and body. And, as soon as he had sinned, a tempestuous flood arose, which ever buffets him with its waves, bringing him weariness and

trouble from himself, the devil, and the world. Everyone was drowned in the flood, because no one, with his own justice alone, could arrive at eternal life. And so, wishing to remedy your great evils, I have given you the Bridge of my Son, in order that, passing across the flood, you may not be drowned, which flood is the tempestuous sea of this dark life. See, therefore, under what obligations the creature is to me, and how ignorant he is, not to take the remedy which I have offered, but to be willing to drown."

CHAPTER XXII

How God induces the soul to look at the greatness of this Bridge, inasmuch as it reaches from earth to heaven.

"OPEN, my daughter, the eye of thy intellect, and thou wilt see the accepted and the ignorant, the imperfect, and also the perfect who follow me in truth, so that thou mayest grieve over the damnation of the ignorant, and rejoice over the perfection of my beloved servants.

"Thou wilt see further how those bear themselves who walk in the light, and those who walk in the darkness. I also wish thee to look at the Bridge of my only-begotten Son, and see the greatness thereof, for it reaches from heaven to earth, that is, that the earth of your humanity is joined to the greatness of the Deity thereby. I say then that this Bridge reaches from heaven to earth, and constitutes the union which I have made with man.

This was necessary, in order to reform the road which was broken, as I said to thee, in order that man should pass through the bitterness of the world, and arrive at life; but the Bridge could not be made of earth sufficiently large to span the flood and give you eternal life, because the earth of human nature was not sufficient to satisfy for guilt, to remove the stain of Adam's sin. Which stain corrupted the whole human race and gave out a stench, as I have said to thee above. It was, therefore, necessary to join human nature with the height of my nature, the Eternal

Deity, so that it might be sufficient to satisfy for the whole human race, so that human nature should sustain the punishment, and that the divine nature, united with the human, should make acceptable the sacrifice of my only Son, offered to me to take death from you and to give you life.

"So the height of the divinity, humbled to the earth, and joined with your humanity, made the Bridge and reformed the road. Why was this done? In order that man might come to his true happiness with the angels. And observe that it is not enough, in order that you should have life, that my Son should have made you this Bridge, unless you walk thereon."

CHAPTER XXIII

How we are all labourers of God in the vineyard of the holy Church; and how each man has his own vine; and how we all must be united in the Son of God, the True Vine.

AT this point the Eternal Truth proceeded to show her that, though he had created us without ourselves, he would not save us without ourselves. Wherefore he wishes us to use our free will by our own unfettered choice, passing our time in the exercise of true virtues, and so continuing from point to point. The Eternal Truth added: "You must all walk across this Bridge, seeking the glory and praise of my name in the salvation of souls, enduring with patient suffering your many fatigues, following the footsteps of this sweet and amorous Word; for in no other way can you arrive at me, and you are my labourers, set to work in the vineyard of the holy Church. You labour in the universal body of the Christian religion, placed there by my grace, having received from me the light of Holy Baptism, which has incorporated you into the mystical body of holy Church, at the hands of my ministers, whom I have placed to labour at your side. You are placed in the universal body of the Church, and they are placed in

her mystical body to feed your souls, ministering to you the blood in the Sacraments which you receive from the Church, their task being to extract the thorns of mortal sin, and to plant in you the seed of grace. They are my labourers in the vine of your soul, grafted upon the vine of the holy Church. And every rational creature has her own vine, that is, the vine of her soul; she labours this vine by means of her will and free choice in time, that is to say, while she lives, but when the time is past she can do no more work, neither good nor evil, but only while she lives can she till the vine in which I have placed her.

"And she has received such strength for this labour of her soul that neither the devil nor any other creature can take it from her without her consent; for she was strengthened in the reception of Holy Baptism, and there was given her then a pruning-knife with the blades of love of virtue and hatred of sin, through which very same love, and hatred of sin, my only-begotten Son died, giving you his blood by which you have life in Holy Baptism. So you have the knife which you should use, by your own free choice, while you have the time, to cut out the thorns of mortal sins and plant the virtues, because in no other way could you receive the fruit of the blood from the ministers labouring at my orders in the holy Church, of whom I say that they remove mortal sin from the vine of the soul and give her grace, showing forth the blood in the Sacraments which are ordained in the Church. It is necessary, therefore, that you should first wash yourselves with true contrition of heart, and hatred of sin, and love of virtue; then, indeed, you will receive the fruit of the blood; but in no other way will you be able to receive it, unless you dispose yourselves for your part, as good branches united to the vine of my only-begotten Son who said: '*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman, and you are the branches.*' And this, indeed, is the truth, that I am the Husbandman, for everything that has being has proceeded and proceeds from me. My power is inestimable, for by it I govern the whole universe, and nothing was ever made or governed without me. I am

the Husbandman who planted the true Vine of my only-begotten Son in the earth of your humanity, so that you, being branches joined to the Vine, may bring forth fruit. But he who does not bring forth the fruit of holy actions will be cut off from the Vine, and will wither away. For being separated from the Vine, he loses the life of grace and is cast into eternal fire, even as the branch which brings forth no fruit is cut off from the vine and burnt, being good for nothing else. Such as these, who are cut off for their offences, and die in the guilt of mortal sin, the divine justice casts into the eternal fire, since they are good for nothing else. These have not laboured their own vine, but, on the contrary, have destroyed it, and not only their own but that of their neighbour; and yet it seems to them that they have planted a good strong plant of virtue, but it has not sprung from the seed of grace, which they received with the light of Holy Baptism, sharing the blood of my Son which was the wine produced by this true Vine. But they have taken that seed and have cast it as food to beasts, that is, to divers and many sinners, and so they have trampled it under the feet of their own disordinate lust, and have ruined themselves and their neighbours; but my servants do not so, and you should imitate them, that is, you should remain calmly united to the true Vine, and then you will bring forth much fruit, because you will participate in the sap thereof. And, remaining thus in my Word, you will remain in me, because he and I are together one thing. Remaining in him, you will follow his teaching, and following his teaching, you will participate in the very substance of his divine Word, that is, you will participate in my Eternal Deity, joined to your humanity, leading you on by a divine love which intoxicates the soul, and therefore I said that you share the substance of the Vine."

CHAPTER XXIV

How God farms and prunes his vine; and how each man's vine is so closely united with his neighbour's that he cannot either cultivate or ruin the one without the other.

"DOST thou know how I act in order that my servants may be united in following the doctrine of my sweet and amorous Word? I prune them in order that they may bring forth much fruit, and that their fruit may be fit for my table, and may not remain wild. In the same way a husbandman prunes and sets in order a good branch of a vine so that it may make better and more wine; and the branch that brings forth no fruit, he cuts away and casts into the fire. So I, the true Husbandman, prune my servants who remain in me with many tribulations, so that they may bring forth more and better fruit, and that their virtue may be proved; and those that do not bring forth fruit are cut off and cast into the fire. These, then, are true labourers who cultivate well their soul, rooting out all self-love, and turning over the earth of their affection on me. They nourish and increase the seed of grace which they received in Holy Baptism, and labouring their own vine, labour their neighbour's, for they cannot labour one without the other. Thou rememberest that all good and all evil were accomplished by means of the neighbour. Thus, then, do you become my husbandmen, proceeding from me, the Superior and Eternal Husbandman who have joined you together, grafting you on the true Vine by the union which I have made with you. Remember, then, that all rational creatures have their own vine indeed, but it is joined directly to their neighbour's vine, so closely that no one can do good or harm to his neighbour without doing it to himself, and all of you together make up the universal vine which is the whole congregation of Christians who are united in the vine of the mystical body of holy Church, from which you draw your life. In which vineyard is planted the Vine of my only-begotten Son, on which you should be grafted; for if you are not grafted

on him, you become rebels to the holy Church, and as limbs cut from the body, which immediately corrupt.

"It is true that, while you have time, you can free yourselves from the stench of sin by true repentance, turning to my ministers, the husbandmen, who hold the key of the wine, that is, of the blood that issued from his Vine. Which blood is so perfectly made that through no defect of the minister can its effect be hindered. The branches are bound up with the bonds of love, and he who binds them must do so with true humility, acquired by a true knowledge of himself and me. See, then, that I have placed you all as husbandmen, and now again I invite you to your labour, because the world is reaching an evil pass; and the thorns are so multiplied in the vineyard that they have crushed out the seed, so that my vines will bring forth no fruit of grace. I wish you, then, to be true husbandmen, and with great zeal to cultivate souls in the mystical body of the holy Church, and this, I say, because I wish to do mercy to the world, for which thou prayest to me so ardently."

CHAPTER XXV

How this soul prays God to show her those who cross by the aforesaid Bridge, and those who do not.

THEN this soul exclaimed with ardent love: "O inestimable Charity, sweet above all sweetness! Who would not be inflamed by such great love? What heart can help breaking at such tenderness? It seems, O Abyss of Charity, as if thou wert mad with love of thy creature, as if thou couldest not live without him, and yet thou art our God who hast no need of us, thy greatness does not increase through our good, for thou art unchangeable, and our evil causes thee no harm, for thou art the Supreme and Eternal Goodness. What moves thee to do us such mercy through pure love, and on account of no debt that thou owedst us, or need that thou hadst of us? We are rather thy guilty and malignant debtors. Where-

fore, if I understand aright, O Supreme and Eternal Truth, I am the thief and thou hast been punished for me. For I see thy Word, thy Son, fastened and nailed to the cross, of which thou hast made me a Bridge, as thou hast shown me, thy miserable servant, for which reason my heart is bursting, and yet cannot burst, through the hunger and the desire which it has conceived towards thee. I remember, my Lord, that thou wast willing to show me who are those who go by the Bridge and those who do not; should it please thy goodness to manifest this to me, willingly would I see and hear it."

CHAPTER XXVI

How this Bridge has three steps, which signify the three states of the soul; and how, being lifted on high, yet it is not separated from the earth; and how these words are to be understood: "*If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things unto me.*"

THEN the Eternal God, to enamour and excite that soul still more for the salvation of souls, replied to her, and said: "First, as I have shown thee that for which thou didst wish, and ask me, I will now explain to thee the nature of this Bridge. I have told thee, my daughter, that the Bridge reaches from heaven to earth; this is through the union which I have made with man, whom I formed of the clay of the earth. Now learn that this Bridge, my only-begotten Son, has three steps, of which two were made with the wood of the most holy cross, and the third still retains the great bitterness he tasted, when he was given gall and vinegar to drink. In these three steps you will recognise three states of the soul, which I will explain to thee below. The feet of the soul, signifying her affection, are the first step, for the feet carry the body as the affection carries the soul. Wherefore these pierced feet are steps by which thou canst arrive at his side, which manifests to thee the secret of his heart, because the soul, rising on the steps of her affection, commences to taste the love of his heart, gazing into that open heart of my Son with

the eye of the intellect, and finds it consumed with ineffable love. I say consumed, because he does not love you for his own profit, because you can be of no profit to him, he being one and the same thing with me. Then the soul is filled with love, seeing herself so much loved. Having passed the second step, the soul reaches out to the third—that is, to the mouth—where she finds peace from the terrible war she has been waging with her sin. On the first step, then, lifting her feet from the affections of the earth, the soul strips herself of vice; on the second she fills herself with love and virtue; and on the third she tastes peace. So the Bridge has three steps, in order that, climbing past the first and the second, you may reach the last, which is lifted on high, so that the water, running beneath, may not touch it; for in my Son was no venom of sin. This Bridge is lifted on high, and yet, at the same time, joined to the earth. Dost thou know when it was lifted on high? When my Son was lifted up on the wood of the most holy cross, the divine nature remaining joined to the lowliness of the earth of your humanity.

"For this reason I said to thee that, being lifted on high, he was not lifted out of the earth, for the divine nature is united and kneaded into one thing with it. And there was no one who could go on the Bridge until it had been lifted on high, wherefore he said: '*Si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad me ipsum*,' that is, '*If I am lifted on high, I will draw all things to me.*' My Goodness, seeing that in no other way could you be drawn to me, sent him in order that he should be lifted on high on the wood of the cross, making of it an anvil on which my Son, born of human generation, should be remade, in order to free you from death, and to restore you to the life of grace; wherefore he drew everything to himself by this means, namely, by showing the ineffable love with which I love you, the heart of man being always attracted by love. Greater love, then, I could not show you, than to lay down my life for you; perforce, then, my Son was treated in this way by love, in order that ignorant man should be unable to resist being drawn to me.

"In very truth, then, my Son said that, being lifted on high, he would draw all things to him. And this is to be understood in two ways. Firstly, that, when the heart of man is drawn by the affection of love, as I have said, it is drawn together with all the powers of his soul, that is, with the memory, the intellect, and the will; now, when these three powers are harmoniously joined together in my name, all the other operations which the man performs, whether in deed or thought, are pleasing, and joined together by the effect of love, because love is lifted on high, following the Sorrowful Crucified One; so my truth said well, '*If I am lifted on high*,' etc., meaning, that if the heart and the powers of the soul are drawn to him, all the actions are also drawn to him. Secondly, everything has been created for the service of man, to serve the necessities of rational creatures, and the rational creature has not been made for them, but for me, in order to serve me with all his heart, and with all his affection. See, then, that man being drawn, everything else is drawn with him, because everything else has been made for him. It was therefore necessary that the Bridge should be lifted on high, and have steps, in order that it might be climbed with greater facility."

CHAPTER XXVII

How this Bridge is built of stones which signify virtues; and how on the Bridge is a hostelry where food is given to the travellers; and how he who goes over the Bridge goes to life, while he who goes under it goes to perdition and death.

"THIS Bridge is built of stones, so that, if the rain come, it may not impede the traveller. Dost thou know what these stones are? They are the stones of true and sincere virtues. These stones were not built into the walls before the Passion of my Son, and therefore even those who attempted to walk by the road of virtue were prevented from arriving at their journey's end, because heaven was not yet unlocked with the key of the blood, and the rain

of justice did not let them pass; but, after the stones were made, and built up on the body of my sweet Son, my Word, of whom I have spoken to thee, he, who was himself the Bridge, moistened the mortar for its building with his blood. That is, his blood was united with the mortar of divinity, and with the fortitude and the fire of love; and by my power these stones of the virtues were built into a wall, upon him as the foundation, for there is no virtue which has not been proved in him, and from him all virtues have their life. Wherefore no one can have the virtue given by a life of grace, but from him, that is, without following the footsteps of his doctrine. He has built a wall of the virtues, planting them as living stones, and cementing them with his blood, so that every believer may walk speedily, and without any servile fear of the rain of divine justice, for he is sheltered by the mercy which descended from heaven in the Incarnation of this my Son. How was heaven opened? With the key of his blood; so thou seest that the Bridge is walled and roofed with mercy. His also is the hostelry in the garden of the holy Church, which keeps and ministers the bread of life, and gives to drink of the blood, so that my creatures, journeying on their pilgrimage, may not, through weariness, faint by the way; and for this reason my love has ordained that the blood and the body of my only-begotten Son, wholly God and wholly man, may be ministered to you. The pilgrim, having passed the Bridge, arrives at the door which is part of the Bridge, at which all must enter, wherefore he says: '*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, he who follows me does not walk in darkness, but in light.*' And in another place my Truth says, '*That no man can come to me if not by him,*' and so indeed it is. Therefore he says of himself that he is the Road, and this is the truth, and I have already shown thee that he is a Road in the form of the Bridge. And he says that he is the Truth, and so he is, because he is united with me who am the Truth, and he who follows him walks in the Truth, and in Life, because he who follows this Truth receives the life of grace, and cannot faint from hunger, because the

Truth has become your food, nor fall in the darkness, because he is light without any falsehood. And with that Truth he confounded and destroyed the lie that the devil told to Eve, with which he broke up the road to heaven, and the Truth brought the pieces together again, and cemented them with his blood. Wherefore, those who follow this road are the sons of the Truth, because they follow the Truth, and pass through the door of Truth and find themselves united to me, who am the Door and the Road and at the same time Infinite Peace.

But he who walks not on this road, goes under the Bridge, in the river where there are no stones, only water, and since there are no supports in the water, no one can travel that way without drowning; thus have come to pass the sins and the condition of the world. Wherefore, if the affection is not placed on the stones, but is placed, with disordinate love, on creatures, loving them, and being kept by them far from me, the soul drowns, for creatures are like water that continually runs past, and man also passes continually like the river, although it seems to him that he stands still and the creatures that he loves pass by, and yet he is passing himself continually to the end of his journey—death! And he would fain retain himself (that is his life, and the things that he loves), but he does not succeed, either through death, by which he has to leave them, or through my disposition, by which these created things are taken from the sight of my creatures. Such as these follow a lie, walking on the road of falsehood, and are sons of the devil, who is the father of lies; and because they pass by the door of falsehood, they receive eternal damnation. So then thou seest, that I have shown thee both truth and falsehood, that is, my road which is truth, and the devil's which is falsehood."

CHAPTER XXVIII

How travelling on both of these roads, that is, the Bridge and the river, is fatiguing; and of the delight which the soul feels in travelling by the Bridge.

"THESE are the two roads, and both are hard to travel. Wonder, then, at the ignorance and blindness of man, who, having a Road made for him, which causes such delight to those who use it, that every bitterness becomes sweet, and every burden light, yet prefers to walk over the water. For those who cross by the Bridge, being still in the darkness of the body, find light, and, being mortal, find immortal life, tasting, through love, the light of Eternal Truth, which promises refreshment to him who wearies himself for me, who am grateful and just, and render to every man according as he deserves. Wherefore every good deed is rewarded, and every fault is punished. The tongue would not be sufficient to relate the delight felt by him who goes on this road, for even in this life he tastes and participates in that good which has been prepared for him in eternal life. He, therefore, is a fool indeed, who despises so great a good, and chooses rather to receive in this life the earnest money of hell, walking by the lower road with great toil, and without any refreshment or advantage. Wherefore, through their sins, they are deprived of me, who am the Supreme and Eternal Good. Truly then hast thou reason for grief, and I will that thou and my other servants remain in continual bitterness of soul at the offence done to me, and in compassion for the ignorant, and the loss of those who, in their ignorance, thus offend me. Now thou hast seen and heard about this Bridge, how it is, and this I have told thee in order to explain my words, that my only-begotten Son was a Bridge. And thus thou seest that he is the Truth, made in the way that I have shown thee—that is, by the union of height and lowliness."

CHAPTER XXIX

How this Bridge, having reached to heaven on the day of the Ascension, did not for that reason leave the earth.

"WHEN my only-begotten Son returned to me, forty days after the resurrection, this Bridge, namely himself, arose from the earth, that is, from among the conversation of men, and ascended into heaven by virtue of the divine nature, and sat at the right hand of me, the Eternal Father, as the angels said, on the day of the ascension, to the disciples, standing like dead men, their hearts lifted on high, and ascended into heaven with the wisdom of my Son: '*Do not stand here any longer, for he is seated at the right hand of the Father!*' When he, then, had thus ascended on high, and returned to me the Father, I sent the Master, that is the Holy Spirit, who came to you with my power and the wisdom of my Son, and with his own clemency, which is the essence of the Holy Spirit. He is one thing with me, the Father, and with my Son. And he built up the road of the doctrine which my Truth had left in the world. Thus, though the bodily presence of my Son left you, his doctrine remained, and the virtue of the stones founded upon this doctrine, which is the way made for you by this Bridge. For first, he practised this doctrine and made the road by his actions, giving you his doctrine by example rather than by words; for he practised first himself what he afterwards taught you, then the clemency of the Holy Spirit made you certain of the doctrine, fortifying the minds of the disciples to confess the truth, and to announce this road, that is, the doctrine of Christ crucified, reproving, by this means, the world of its injustice and false judgement, of which injustice and false judgement I will in time discourse to you at greater length.

"This much I have said to thee in order that there might be no cloud of darkness in the mind of your hearers, that is, that they may know that of this body of Christ I

made a Bridge by the union of the divine with the human nature, for this is the truth.

"This Bridge, taking its point of departure in you, rose into heaven, and was the one road which was taught you by the example and life of the Truth. What has now remained of all this, and where is the road to be found? I will tell thee, that is, I will rather tell those who might fall into ignorance on this point. I tell thee that this way of his doctrine, of which I have spoken to thee, confirmed by the Apostles, declared by the blood of the martyrs, illuminated by the light of doctors, confessed by the confessors, narrated in all its love by the Evangelists, all of whom stand as witnesses to confess the Truth, is found in the mystical body of the holy Church. These witnesses are like a light placed on a candlestick, to show forth the way of the Truth which leads to life with a perfect light, as I have said to thee, and, as they themselves say to thee, with proof, since they have proved in their own cases that every person may, if he will, be illuminated to know the Truth, unless he choose to deprive his reason of light by his inordinate self-love. It is, indeed, the truth that his doctrine is true, and has remained like a lifeboat to draw the soul out of the tempestuous sea and to conduct her to the port of salvation.

"Wherefore, first I gave you the Bridge of my Son living and conversing in very deed amongst men, and when he, the living Bridge, left you, there remained the Bridge and the road of his doctrine, as has been said, his doctrine being joined with my power, and with his wisdom, and with the clemency of the Holy Spirit. This power of mine gives the virtue of fortitude to whoever follows this road, wisdom gives him light, so that in this road he may recognise the truth, and the Holy Spirit gives him love, which consumes and takes away all sensitive love out of the soul, leaving there only the love of virtue. Thus in both ways, both actually and through his doctrine, he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that is, the Bridge which leads you to the height of heaven. This is what he meant when he said, '*I came from the Father, and I return*

to the Father, and shall return to you'; that is to say, 'My Father sent me to you, and made me your Bridge, so that you might be saved from the river and attain to life.' Then he says, '*I will return to you, I will not leave you orphans, but will send you the Paraclete*'—as if my Truth should say, 'I will go to the Father and return; that is, that when the Holy Spirit shall come, who is called the Paraclete, he will show you more clearly, and will confirm you in the way of truth, that I have given you.' He said that he would return, and he did return, because the Holy Spirit came not alone, but with the power of the Father, and the wisdom of the Son, and the clemency of his own essence.

"See then how he returns, not in actual flesh and blood, but, as I have said, building the road of his doctrine with his power, which road cannot be destroyed or taken away from him who wishes to follow it, because it is firm and stable, and proceeds from me, who am immovable.

"Manfully, then, should you follow this road, without any cloud of doubt, but with the light of faith which has been given you as a principle in Holy Baptism.

"Now I have fully shown to you the Bridge as it actually is, and the doctrine, which is one and the same thing with it. And I have shown it to the ignorant, in order that they may see where this road of Truth is, and where stand those who teach it; and I have explained that they are the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Evangelists, and holy Doctors, placed like lanterns in the holy Church.

"And I have shown how my Son, returning to me, none the less returned to you, not in his bodily presence, but by his power, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, as I have said. For in his bodily presence he will not return until the last day of judgement, when he will come again with my majesty and divine power to judge the world, to render good to the virtuous, and reward them for their labours, both in body and soul, and to dispense the evil of eternal death to those who have lived wickedly in the world.

"And now I wish to tell thee that which I, the Truth,

promised thee, that is, to show thee the perfect, the imperfect, and the supremely perfect; and the wicked, who, through their iniquities, drown in the river, attaining to punishment and torment; wherefore I say to you, my dearest sons, walk over the Bridge, and not underneath it, because underneath is not the way of truth, but the way of falsehood, by which walk the wicked, of whom I will presently speak to you. These are those sinners for whom I beg you to pray to me, and for whom I ask in addition your tears and sweat, in order that they may receive mercy from me."

CHAPTER XXX

How this soul, wondering at the mercy of God, relates many gifts and grace given to the human race.

THEN this soul, as it were, like one intoxicated, could not contain herself, but, standing before the face of God, exclaimed: "How great is the eternal mercy with which thou coverest the sins of thy creatures! I do not wonder that thou sayest of those who abandon mortal sin and return to thee, '*I do not remember that you have ever offended me.*' O ineffable mercy! I do not wonder that thou sayest this to those who are converted, when thou sayest of those who persecute thee, 'I wish you to pray for such, in order that I may do them mercy.' O mercy who proceedest from thy eternal Father, the divinity who governest with thy power the whole world, by thee were we created, in thee were we recreated in the blood of thy Son. Thy mercy preserves us, thy mercy caused thy Son to do battle for us, hanging by his arms on the wood of the cross, life and death battling together; then life confounded the death of our sin, and the death of our sin destroyed the bodily life of the Immaculate Lamb. Which was finally conquered? Death! By what means? Mercy! Thy mercy gives light and life, by which thy clemency is known in all thy creatures, both the just and the unjust. In the height of heaven thy mercy shines, that is, in thy

saints. If I turn to the earth, it abounds with thy mercy. In the darkness of hell thy mercy shines, for the damned do not receive the pains they deserve; with thy mercy thou temperest justice. By mercy thou hast washed us in the blood, and by mercy thou wishest to converse with thy creatures. O Loving Madman! was it not enough for thee to become incarnate, that thou must also die? Was not death enough, that thou must also descend into Limbo, taking thence the holy fathers to fulfil thy mercy and thy truth in them? Because thy goodness promises a reward to them that serve thee in truth, didst thou descend to Limbo, to withdraw from their pain thy servants, and give them the fruit of their labours. Thy mercy constrains thee to give even more to man, namely, to leave thyself to him in food, so that we, weak ones, should have comfort, and the ignorant commemorating thee should not lose the memory of thy benefits. Wherefore every day thou givest thyself to man, representing thyself in the Sacrament of the Altar, in the body of thy holy Church. What has done this? Thy mercy. O Divine Mercy! my heart suffocates in thinking of thee, for on every side to which I turn my thought, I find nothing but mercy. O Eternal Father! forgive my ignorance, that I presume thus to chatter to thee, but the love of thy mercy will be my excuse before the face of thy loving-kindness."

CHAPTER XXXI

Of the baseness of those who pass by the river under the Bridge; and how the soul that passes underneath, is called by God the tree of death, whose roots are held in four vices.

AFTER this soul had refreshed a little her heart in the mercy of God by these words, she humbly waited for the fulfilment of the promise made to her, and God continuing his discourse said: "Dearest daughter, thou hast spoken before me of my mercy, because I gave it thee to taste and to see in the word which I spoke to thee when I said:

'these are those for whom I pray you to intercede with me;' but know, that my mercy is without any comparison, far more than thou canst see, because thy sight is imperfect, and my mercy perfect and infinite, so that there can be no comparison between the two, except what may be between a finite and an infinite thing. But I have wished that thou shouldest taste this mercy, and also the dignity of man, which I have shown thee above, so that thou mightest know better the cruelty of those wicked men who travel below the Bridge. Open the eye of thy intellect, and wonder at those who voluntarily drown themselves, and at the baseness to which they are fallen by their fault, from which cause they have first become weak, and this was when they conceived mortal sin in their minds, for they then bring it forth, and lose the life of grace. And, as a corpse which can have no feeling or movement of itself, but only when it is moved and lifted by others, so those who are drowned in the stream of disordinate love of the world are dead to grace. Wherefore because they are dead their memory takes no heed of my mercy. The eye of their intellect sees not and knows not my truth, because their feeling is dead, that is, their intellect has no object before it but themselves, with the dead love of their own sensuality, and so their will is dead to my will because it loves nothing but dead things. These three powers then being dead, all the soul's operations both in deed and thought are dead as far as grace is concerned. For the soul cannot defend herself against her enemies, nor help herself through her own power, but only so far as she is helped by me. It is true indeed, that every time that this corpse, in whom only free will has remained (which remains as long as the mortal body lives), asks my help, he can have it, but never can he help himself; he has become insupportable to himself, and, wishing to govern the world, is governed by that which is not, that is by sin, for sin in itself is nothing, and such men have become the servants and slaves of sin. I had made them trees of love with the life of grace which they received in Holy Baptism; and they have become trees of death, because they are dead,

as I have already said to thee. Dost thou know how this tree finds such roots? In the height of pride, which is nourished by their own sensitive self-love. Its branch is their own impatience, and its off-shoot indiscretion: these are the four principal vices which destroy the soul of him who is a tree of death, because he has not drawn life from grace. Inside the tree is nourished the worm of conscience, which, while man lives in mortal sin, is blinded by self-love, and therefore felt but little; the fruits of this tree are mortal, for they have drawn their nourishment, which should have been humility, from the roots of pride, and the miserable soul is full of ingratitude, whence proceeds every evil. But if she were grateful for the benefits she has received, she would know me, and knowing me would know herself, and so would remain in my love: but she, as if blind, goes groping down the river, and she does not see that the water does not support her."

CHAPTER XXXII

How the fruits of this tree are as diverse as are the sins; and first, of the sin of sensuality.

"THE fruits of this death-giving tree are as diverse as sins are diverse. See that some of these fruits are the food of beasts who live impurely, using their body and their mind like a swine who wallows in mud, for in the same way they wallow in the mire of sensuality. O ugly soul, where hast thou left thy dignity? Thou wast made sister to the angels, and now thou art become a brute beast. To such misery come sinners, notwithstanding that they are sustained by me, who am supreme purity, notwithstanding that the very devils, whose friends and servants they have become, cannot endure the sight of such filthy actions. Neither does any sin, abominable as it may be, take away the light of the intellect from man so much as does this one. This the philosophers knew, not by the light of grace, because they had it not, but

because nature gave them the light to know that this sin obscured the intellect, and for that reason they preserved themselves in continence the better to study. Thus also they flung away their riches in order that the thought of them should not occupy their heart. Not so does the ignorant and false Christian, who has lost grace by sin."

CHAPTER XXXIII

How the fruit of others is avarice; and of the evils that proceed from it.

"A FRUIT of the earth belongs to some others, who are covetous misers, acting like the mole, who always feeds on earth till death, and when they arrive at death they find no remedy. Such as these, with their meanness, despise my generosity, selling time to their neighbour. They are cruel usurers, and robbers of their neighbour; because in their memory they have not the remembrance of my mercy, for if they had it they would not be cruel to themselves or to their neighbour; on the contrary, they would be compassionate and merciful to themselves, practising the virtues on their neighbour and succouring him charitably. Oh, how many are the evils that come of this cursed sin of avarice, how many homicides and thefts, and how much pillage with unlawful gain, and cruelty of heart and injustice! It kills the soul and makes her the slave of riches, so that she cares not to observe my commandments.

"A miser loves no one except for his own profit. Avarice proceeds from and feeds pride; the one follows from the other, because the miser always carries with him the thought of his own reputation, and thus avarice, which is immediately combined with pride, full of its own opinions, goes on from bad to worse. It is a fire which always germinates the smoke of vainglory and vanity of heart, and boasting in that which does not belong to it. It is a root which has many branches, and the principal one is

that which makes a man care for his own reputation, from whence proceeds his desire to be greater than his neighbour. It also brings forth the deceitful heart that is neither pure nor liberal, but is double, making a man show one thing with his tongue, while he has another in his heart, and making him conceal the truth and tell lies for his own profit. And it produces envy, which is a worm that is always gnawing, and does not let the miser have any happiness out of his own or others' good. How will these wicked ones in so wretched a state give of their substance to the poor, when they rob others? How will they draw their foul soul out of the mire, when they themselves put it there? Sometimes even do they become so brutish, that they do not consider their children and relations, and cause them to fall with them into great misery. And nevertheless, in my mercy I sustain them, I do not command the earth to swallow them up, that they may repent of their sins. Would they then give their life for the salvation of souls, when they will not give their substance? Would they give their affections when they are gnawed with envy? Oh, miserable vices that destroy the heaven of the soul! Heaven I call her (the soul) because so I made her, living in her at first by grace, and hiding myself within her, and making of her a mansion through affection of love. Now she has separated herself from me, like an adulteress, loving herself and creatures more than me, and has made a god of herself, persecuting me with many and diverse sins. And this she does because she does not consider the benefit of the blood that was shed with so great fire of love."

CHAPTER XXXIV

How some others hold positions of authority, and bring forth fruits of injustice.

"THERE are others who hold their heads high by their position of authority, and who bear the banner of injustice —using injustice against me, God, and against their

neighbour, and against themselves—to themselves by not paying the debt of virtue, and towards me by not paying the debt of honour in glorifying and praising my name, which debt they are bound to pay. But they, like thieves, steal what is mine, and give it to the service of their own sensuality. So that they commit injustice towards me and towards themselves, like blind and ignorant men who do not recognise me in themselves on account of self-love, like the Jews and the ministers of the Law who, with envy and self-love, blinded themselves so that they did not recognise the Truth, my only-begotten Son, and rendered not his due to the Eternal Truth who was amongst them, as said my Truth: '*The kingdom of God is among you.*' But they knew it not, because, in the aforesaid way, they had lost the light of reason, and so they did not pay their debt of honour and glory to me, and to him, who was one thing with me, and like blind ones committed injustice, persecuting him with much ignominy, even to the death of the cross.

"Thus are such as these unjust to themselves, to me, and to their neighbour, unjustly selling the flesh of their dependants, and of any person who falls into their hands."

CHAPTER XXXV

How through these and through other defects, one falls into false judgement; and of the indignity to which one comes.

"By these and by other sins men fall into false judgement, as I will explain to you below. They are continually being scandalised by my works, which are all just, and all performed in truth through love and mercy. With this false judgement, and with the poison of envy and pride, the works of my Son were slandered and unjustly judged, and with lies did his enemies say: '*This man works by virtue of Beelzebub.*' Thus wicked men, standing in self-love, impurity, pride, and avarice, and founded in envy, and in perverse rashness with impatience, are for ever scandalised

at me and at my servants, whom they judge to be feignedly practising the virtues, because their heart is rotten, and, having spoilt their taste, good things seem evil to them, and bad things, that is to say, disorderly living, seem good to them. Oh, how blind is the human generation in that it considers not its own dignity! From being great thou hast become small, from a ruler thou hast become a slave, and that in the vilest service that can be had, because thou art the servant and slave of sin, and art become like unto that which thou dost serve.

"Sin is nothing. Thou, then, hast become nothing; it has deprived thee of life, and given thee death. This life and power were given you by the Word, my only-begotten Son, the glorious Bridge, he drawing you from out of your servitude when you were servants of the devil, himself becoming as a servant to take you out of servitude, imposing on himself obedience to do away the disobedience of Adam, and humbling himself to the shameful death of the cross to confound pride. By his death he destroyed every vice, so that no one could say that any vice remained that was not punished and beaten out with pains, as I said to thee above, when I said that of his body he had made an anvil. All the remedies are ready to save men from eternal death, and they despise the blood, and have trampled it under the feet of their disordinate affection; and it is for this injustice and false judgement that the world is reproved, and will be reproved on the last day of judgement.

"This was meant by my Truth when he said: '*I will send the Paraclete, who will reprove the world for injustice and false judgement.*' And it was reproved when I sent the Holy Spirit on the Apostles."

CHAPTER XXXVI

Of the words that Christ said: "*I will send the Holy Spirit, who will reprove the world of injustice and of false judgement*"; and how one of these reproofs is continuous.

"THERE are three reproofs. One was given when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, who, as it is said, being fortified by my power, and illuminated by the wisdom of my beloved Son, received all in the plenitude of the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit, who is one thing with me and with my Son, reproved the world by the mouth of the Apostles, with the doctrine of my Truth. They and all others who are descended from them, following the truth which they understand through the same means, reprove the world.

"This is that continuous reproof that I make to the world by means of the holy Scriptures, and my servants, putting the Holy Spirit on their tongues to announce my truth, even as the devil puts himself on the tongues of his servants, that is to say, of those who pass through the river in iniquity. This is that sweet reproof that I have fixed for ever, in the aforesaid way, out of my most great affection of love for the salvation of souls. And they cannot say, 'I had no one who reproved me,' because the truth is revealed to them showing them vice and virtue. And I have made them see the fruit of virtue, and the hurtfulness of vice, to give them love and holy fear with hatred of vice and love of virtue, and this truth has not been shown them by an angel, so that they cannot say, 'The angel is a blessed spirit who cannot offend, and feels not the vexations of the flesh as we do, neither the heaviness of our body,' because the incarnate Word of my Truth has been given to them with your mortal flesh.

"Who were the others who followed this Word? Mortal creatures, susceptible of pain like you, having the same opposition of the flesh to the spirit, as had the glorious Paul, my standard bearer, and many other saints who, by one thing or another, have been tormented. Which

torments I permitted for the increase of grace and virtue in their souls. Thus, they were born in sin like you, and nourished with a like food, and I am God now as then. My power is not weakened and cannot become weak. So that I can and will succour him who wishes to be succoured by me. Man wants my succour when he comes out of the river, and walks by the Bridge, following the doctrine of my Truth. Thus no one has any excuse, because both reproof and truth are constantly given to them. Wherefore, if they do not amend while they have time, they will be condemned by the second condemnation which will take place at the extremity of death, when my Justice will cry to them, 'Rise, ye dead, and come to judgement!' That is to say, 'Thou who art dead to grace, and hast reached the moment of thy corporal death, arise and come before the Supreme Judge with thy injustice and false judgement, and with the extinguished light of faith which thou didst receive burning in Holy Baptism (and which thou hast blown out with the wind of pride), and with the vanity of thy heart, with which thou dost set thy sails to winds which were contrary to thy salvation, for with the wind of self-esteem didst thou fill the sail of self-love.' Thus didst thou hasten down the stream of the delights and dignities of the world at thy own will, following thy fragile flesh and the temptations of the devil, who, with the sail of thy own will set, has led thee along the underway which is a running stream, and so has brought thee with himself to eternal damnation."

CHAPTER XXXVII

Of the second reproof of injustice, and of false judgement, in general and in particular.

"THIS second reproof, dearest daughter, is indeed a condemnation, for the soul has arrived at the end, where there can be no remedy, for she is at the extremity of death, where is the worm of conscience, which I told thee

was blinded self-love. Now at the time of death, since she cannot get out of my hands, she begins to see, and therefore is gnawed with remorse, seeing that her own sin has brought her into so great evil. But if the soul have light to know and grieve for her fault, not on account of the pain of hell that follows upon it, but on account of pain at her offence against me, who am Supreme and Eternal Good, still she can find mercy. But if she pass the Bridge of death without light, and alone, with the worm of conscience, without the hope of the blood, and bewailing herself more on account of her first condemnation than on account of my displeasure, she arrives at eternal damnation. And then she is reproved cruelly by my justice of injustice and of false judgement, and not so much of general injustice and false judgement which she has practised generally in all her works, but much more on account of the particular injustice and false judgement which she practises at the end, in judging her misery greater than my mercy. This is that sin which is neither pardoned here nor there, because the soul would not be pardoned, depreciating my mercy. Therefore is this last sin graver to me than all the other sins that the soul has committed. Wherefore the despair of Judas displeased me more, and was more grave to my Son than was his betrayal of him. So that they are reproved of this false judgement, which is to have held their sin to be greater than my mercy, and on that account are they punished with the devils, and eternally tortured with them. And they are reproved of injustice because they grieve more over their condemnation than over my displeasure, and do not render to me that which is mine, and to themselves that which is theirs. For to me they ought to render love and to themselves bitterness, with contrition of heart, and offer it to me for the offence they have done me. And they do the contrary, because they give to themselves love, pitying themselves, and grieving on account of the pain they expect for their sin; so thou seest that they are guilty of injustice and false judgement, and are punished for the one and the other together. Wherefore they, having depreciated my

mercy, I with justice send them, with their cruel servant, sensuality, and the cruel tyrant the devil, whose servants they made themselves through their own sensuality, so that together they are punished and tormented, as together they have offended me. Tormented, I say, by my ministering devils whom my judgement has appointed to torment those who have done evil."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Of the four principal torments of the damned, from which follow all the others; and particularly of the foulness of the devil.

"My daughter, the tongue is not sufficient to narrate the pain of these poor souls. As there are three principal vices, namely: self-love, whence proceeds the second, that is love of reputation, whence proceeds the third, that is pride, with injustice and cruelty, and with other filthiness and iniquitous sins that follow upon these. So I say to thee, that in hell the souls have four principal torments, out of which proceed all the other torments. The first is, that they see themselves deprived of the vision of me, which is such pain to them that, were it possible, they would rather choose the fire, and the tortures and torments, and see me, than to be without the torments and not to see me.

"This first pain revives in them, then, the second, the worm of conscience, which gnaws unceasingly, seeing that the soul is deprived of me, and of the conversation of the angels, through her sin, made worthy of the conversation and sight of the devils, which vision of the devil is the third pain and redoubles to them their every toil. As the saints exult in the sight of me, refreshing themselves with joyousness in the fruit of their toils borne for me with such abundance of love, and displeasure of themselves, so does the sight of the devil revive these wretched ones to torments, because in seeing him they know themselves more, that is to say, they know that, by their own sin,

they have made themselves worthy of him. And so the worm of conscience gnaws more and more, and the fire of this conscience never ceases to burn. And the sight is more painful to them, because they see him in his own form, which is so horrible that the heart of man could not imagine it. And if thou remember well, thou knowest that I showed him to thee in his own form for a little space of time, hardly a moment, and thou didst choose (after thou hadst returned to thyself) rather to walk on a road of fire, even until the day of judgement, than to see him again. With all this that thou hast seen, even thou dost not know well how horrible he is, because, by divine justice, he appears more horrible to the soul that is deprived of me, and more or less according to the gravity of her sin. The fourth torment that they have is the fire. This fire burns and does not consume, for the being of the soul cannot be consumed, because it is not a material thing that fire can consume. But I, by divine justice, have permitted the fire to burn them with torments, so that it torments them, without consuming them, with the greatest pains in diverse ways according to the diversity of their sins, to some more, and to some less, according to the gravity of their fault. Out of these four torments issue all others, such as cold and heat and gnashing of the teeth and many others. Now because they did not amend themselves after the first reproof that they had of injustice and false judgement, neither in the second, which was that, in death, they would not hope in me, nor grieve for the offence done to me, but only for their own pain, have they thus so miserably received eternal punishment."

CHAPTER XXXIX

Of the third reproof which is made on the Day of Judgement.

"Now it remains to tell of the third reproof which is on the last day of judgement. Already I have told thee of two, and now, so that thou mayest see how greatly man

deceives himself, I will tell thee of the third—of the general judgement, when the pain of the miserable soul is renewed and increased by the union that the soul will make with the body, with an intolerable reproof, which will generate in it confusion and shame. Know that, in the last day of judgement, when will come the Word—my Son, with my divine majesty to reprove the world with divine power, he will not come like a poor one, as when he was born, coming in the womb of the Virgin, and being born in a stable amongst the animals, and then dying between two thieves. Then I concealed my power in him, letting him suffer pain and torment like man, not that my divine nature was therefore separated from human nature, but I let him suffer like man to satisfy for your guilt. He will not come thus in that last moment, but he will come with power, to reprove in his own person, and will render to every one his due, and there will be no one in that day who will not tremble. To the miserable ones who are damned, his aspect will cause such torment and terror that the tongue cannot describe it. To the just it will cause the fear of reverence with great joy; not that his face changes, because he is unchangeable, being one thing with me according to the divine nature, and, according to the human nature, his face was unchangeable, after it took the glory of the resurrection. But to the eye of the damned, it will appear such, on account of their terrible and darkened vision, that as the sun, which is so bright, appears all darkness to the infirm eye, but to the healthy eye light (and it is not the defect of the light that makes it appear other to the blind than to the illuminated one, but the defect of the eye which is infirm), so will the condemned ones see his countenance in darkness, in confusion and in hatred, not through defect of my divine majesty, with which he will come to judge the world, but through their own defect."

CHAPTER XL

How the damned cannot desire any good.

"And their hatred is so great that they cannot will or desire any good, but they continually blaspheme me. And dost thou know why they cannot desire good? Because the life of man ended, free will is bound. Wherefore they cannot merit, having lost, as they have, the time to do so. If they finish their life, dying in hatred with the guilt of mortal sin, their souls, by divine justice, remain for ever bound with the bonds of hatred, and for ever obstinate in that evil, in which, therefore, being gnawed by themselves, their pains always increase, especially the pains of those who have been the cause of damnation to others, as that rich man who was damned demonstrated to you when he begged the favour that Lazarus might go to his brothers who were in the world, to tell them of his pains. This, certainly, he did not do out of love or compassion for his brothers, for he was deprived of love and could not desire good, either for my honour or their salvation, because, as I have already told thee, the damned souls cannot do any good to their neighbour, and they blaspheme me, because their life ended in hatred of me and of virtue. But why then did he do it? He did it because he was the eldest, and had nourished them up in the same miseries in which he had lived, so that he was the cause of their damnation, and he saw pain increased to himself, on account of their damnation when they should arrive in torment together with him, to be gnawed for ever by hatred, because in hatred they finished their lives."

CHAPTER XLI

Of the glory of the blessed.

"Similarly, the just soul, for whom life finishes in the affection of charity and the bonds of love, cannot increase in virtue, time having come to nought, but she can always

love with that affection with which she comes to me, and that measure that is measured to her. She always desires me, and loves me, and her desire is not in vain—being hungry, she is satisfied, and being satisfied, she has hunger, but the tediousness of satiety and the pain of hunger are far from her. In love, the blessed rejoice in my eternal vision, participating in that good that I have in myself, everyone according to his measure, that is that, with that measure of love with which they have come to me, is it measured to them. Because they have lived in love of me and of the neighbour, united together with the general love and the particular, which, moreover both proceed from the same love. And they rejoice and exult, participating in each other's good with the affection of love, besides the universal good that they enjoy altogether. And they rejoice and exult with the angels with whom they are placed, according to their diverse and various virtues in the world, being all bound in the bonds of love. And they have a special participation with those whom they closely loved with particular affection in the world, with which affection they grew in grace, increasing virtue, and the one was the occasion to the other of manifesting the glory and praise of my name, in themselves and in their neighbour; and, in the life everlasting, they have not lost their love, but have it still, participating closely, with more abundance, the one with the other, their love being added to the universal good, and I would not that thou shouldest think that they have this particular good, of which I have told thee, for themselves alone, for it is not so, but it is shared by all the proved citizens, my beloved sons, and all the angels—for, when the soul arrives at eternal life, all participate in the good of that soul, and the soul in their good. Not that her vessel or theirs can increase, nor that there be need to fill it, because it is full, but they have an exultation, a mirthfulness, a jubilee, a joyousness in themselves, which is refreshed by the knowledge that they have found in that soul. They see that, by my mercy, she is raised from the earth with the plenitude of grace, and therefore they exult in me in the

good of that soul, which good she has received through my goodness.

"And that soul rejoïces in me, and in the souls, and in the blessed spirits, seeing and tasting in them the beauty and the sweetness of my love. And their desires for ever cry out to me for the salvation of the whole world. And because their life ended in the love of their neighbour, they have not left it behind, but, with it, they will pass through the Door, my only-begotten Son in the way that I will relate to thee. So thou seest that in those bonds of love in which they finished their life, they go on and remain eternally. They are conformed so entirely to my will, that they cannot desire except what I desire, because their free will is bound in the bond of love in such a way that, time failing them, and dying in a state of grace, they cannot sin any more. And their will is so united with mine, that a father or a mother seeing their son, or a son seeing his father or his mother in hell, do not trouble themselves, and even are contented to see them punished as my enemies. Wherefore in nothing do they disagree with me, and their desires are all satisfied. The desire of the blessed is to see my honour in you wayfarers, who are pilgrims, for ever running on towards the term of death. In their desire for my honour, they desire your salvation, and always pray to me for you, which desire is fulfilled by me, when you ignorant ones do not resist my mercy. They have a desire too, to regain the gifts of their body, but this desire does not afflict them, as they do not actually feel it, but they rejoice in tasting the desire, from the certainty they feel of having it fulfilled. Their desire does not afflict them, because, though they have it not yet fulfilled, no bliss is thereby lacking to them. Wherefore they feel not the pain of desire. And think not that the bliss of the body after the resurrection gives more bliss to the soul, for if this were so, it would follow that, until they had the body, they had imperfect bliss, which cannot be, because no perfection is lacking to them. So it is not the body that gives bliss to the soul, but the soul will give bliss to the body, because the soul will give of her abundance, and will reclothe herself on the last day

of judgement in the garments of her own flesh which she had quitted. For, as the soul is made immortal, stayed and stablished in me, so the body in that union becomes immortal, and, having lost heaviness, is made fine and light. Wherefore, know that the glorified body can pass through a wall, and that neither water nor fire can injure it, not by virtue of itself, but by virtue of the soul, which virtue is of me, given to her by grace, and by the ineffable love with which I created her in my image and likeness. The eye of thy intellect is not sufficient to see, nor thy ear to hear, nor thy tongue to tell of the good of the blessed. Oh, how much delight they have in seeing me, who am every good! Oh, how much delight they will have in being with the glorified body, though, not having that delight from now to the general judgement, they have not, on that account, pain, because no bliss is lacking to them, the soul being satisfied in herself, and, as I have told thee, the body will participate in this bliss.

"I told thee of the happiness which the glorified body would take in the glorified humanity of my only-begotten Son, which gives you assurance of your resurrection. There they exult in his wounds, which have remained fresh, and the scars of his body are preserved, and continually cry for mercy for you, to me, the Supreme and Eternal Father. And they are all conformed with him in joyousness and mirth, and you will all be conformed with him, eye with eye, and hand with hand, and with the whole body of the sweet Word my Son, and, dwelling in me, you will dwell in him, because he is one thing with me. But their bodily eye, as I told thee, will delight itself in the glorified humanity of the Word, my only-begotten Son. Why so? Because their life finished in the affection of my love, and therefore will this delight endure for them eternally. Not that they can work any good, but they rejoice and delight in that good which they have brought with them, that is, they cannot do any meritorious act, by which they could merit anything, because in this life alone can they merit and sin, according as they please, with free will.

"These then do not await, with fear, the divine judge-

ment, but with joy, and the face of my Son will not seem to them terrible, or full of hatred, because they finished their lives in love and affection for me, and goodwill towards their neighbour. So thou seest then, that the transformation is not in his face, when he comes to judge with my divine majesty, but in the vision of those who will be judged by him. To the damned he will appear with hatred and with justice. And to the saved with love and mercy."

CHAPTER XLII

How, after the general judgement, the pain of the damned will increase.

"I HAVE told thee of the dignity of the righteous, so that thou mayest the better know the misery of the damned. For this is another of their pains, namely, the vision of the bliss of the righteous, which is to them an increase of pain, as to the righteous, the damnation of the damned is an increase of exultation in my goodness. As light is seen better near darkness, and darkness near light, so the sight of the blessed increases their pain. With pain they await the last day of judgement, because they see, following it, an increase of pain to themselves. And so will it be, because when that terrible voice shall say to them, 'Arise, ye dead, and come to judgement,' the soul will return with the body, in the just to be glorified, and in the damned to be tortured eternally. And the aspect of my truth, and of all the blessed ones will reproach them greatly, and make them ashamed, and the worm of conscience will gnaw the pith of the tree, that is, the soul, and also the bark outside, which is the body. They will be reproached by the blood that was shed for them, and by the works of mercy, spiritual and temporal, which I did for them by means of my Son, and which they should have done for their neighbour, as is contained in the holy Gospel. They will be reproved for their cruelty towards their neighbour, for their pride and self-love, for their

filthiness and avarice; and when they see the mercy that they have received from me, their reproof will seem to be intensified in harshness. At the time of death, the soul only is reproved, but, at the general judgement, the soul is reproved together with the body, because the body has been the companion and instrument of the soul—to do good and evil according as the free will pleased. Every work, good or bad, is done by means of the body. And therefore, justly, my daughter, glory and infinite good are rendered to my elect ones with their glorified body, rewarding them for the toils they bore for me, together with the soul. And to the perverse ones will be rendered eternal pains by means of their body, because their body was the instrument of evil. Wherefore, their body being restored, their pains will revive and increase at the aspect of my Son, their miserable sensuality with its filthiness, in the vision of their nature (that is, the humanity of Christ), united with the purity of my Deity, and of this mass of their Adam nature raised above all the choirs of angels, and themselves, by their own fault, sunk into the depths of hell. And they will see generosity and mercy shining in the blessed ones, who receive the fruit of the blood of the Lamb, the pains that they have borne remaining as ornaments on their bodies, like the dye upon the cloth, not by virtue of the body but only out of the fulness of the soul, representing in the body the fruit of its labour, because it was the companion of the soul in the working of virtue. As in the mirror is represented the face of the man, so in the body is represented the fruit of bodily toils, in the way that I have told thee.

"The pain and confusion of the darkened ones, on seeing so great a dignity (of which they are deprived), will increase, and in their bodies will appear the sign of the wickedness they have committed, with pain and torture. And when they hear that terrible speech, '*Go, cursed ones, to the eternal fire*,' the soul and the body will go to be with the devil without any remedy or hope—each one being wrapped up in diverse filth of earth, according to his evil works. The miser with the filth of

avarice, wrapping himself up with the worldly substance which he loved disordinately, and burning in the fire; the cruel one with cruelty; the foul man with foulness and miserable concupiscence; the unjust with his injustice; the envious with envy; and the hater of his neighbour with hatred. And inordinate self-love, whence were born all their ills, will be burnt with intolerable pain, as the head and principle of every evil, in company with pride. So that body and soul together will be punished in diverse ways. Thus miserably do they arrive at their end who go by the lower way, that is, by the river, not turning back to see their sins and my mercy. And they arrive at the gate of the lie, because they follow the doctrine of the devil, who is the father of lies; and this devil is their door, through which they go to eternal damnation, as has been said, as the elect and my sons, keeping by the way above, that is by the Bridge, follow the Way of Truth, and this Truth is the Door, and therefore said my Truth, '*No one can go to the Father but by me.*' He is the Door and the Way through which they pass to enter the sea pacific. It is the contrary for those who have kept the way of the lie, which leads them to the water of death. And it is to this that the devil calls them, and they are as blind and mad, and do not perceive it, because they have lost the light of faith. The devil says, as it were, to them: 'Whosoever thirsts for the water of death, let him come and I will give it to him.'"

CHAPTER XLIII

Of the use of temptations, and how every soul in her extremity sees her final place either of pain or of glory, before she is separated from the body.

"THE devil, dearest daughter, is the instrument of my justice to torment the souls who have miserably offended me. And I have set him in this life to tempt and molest my creatures, not for my creatures to be conquered, but that they may conquer, proving their virtue, and receive

from me the glory of victory. And no one should fear any battle or temptation of the devil that may come to him, because I have made my creatures strong, and have given them strength of will, fortified in the blood of my Son, which will neither devil nor creature can move, because it is yours, given by me. You therefore, with free arbitration, can hold it or leave it, according as you please. It is an arm, which, if you place it in the hands of the devil, straightway becomes a knife, with which he strikes you and slays you. But if man do not give this knife of his will into the hands of the devil, that is, if he do not consent to his temptations and molestations, he will never be injured by the guilt of sin in any temptation, but will even be fortified by it, when the eye of his intellect is opened to see my love which allowed him to be tempted, so as to arrive at virtue, by being proved. For one does not arrive at virtue except through knowledge of self, and knowledge of me, which knowledge is more perfectly acquired in the time of temptation, because then man knows himself to be nothing, being unable to lift off himself the pains and vexations which he would flee; and he knows me in his will, which is fortified by my goodness, so that it does not yield to these thoughts. And he has seen that my love permits these temptations, for the devil is weak, and by himself can do nothing, unless I allow him. And I let him tempt, through love, and not through hatred, that you may conquer, and not that you may be conquered, and that you may come to a perfect knowledge of yourself, and of me, and that virtue may be proved, for it is not proved except by its contrary. Thou seest, then, that he is my minister to torture the damned in hell, and in this life, to exercise and prove virtue in the soul. Not that it is the intention of the devil to prove virtue in you (for he has not love), but rather to deprive you of it, and this he cannot do, if you do not wish it. Now thou seest, then, how great is the foolishness of men in making themselves feeble, when I have made them strong, and in putting themselves into the hands of the devil. Wherefore, know, that at the moment of death,

they having passed their life under the lordship of the devil (not that they were forced to do so, for as I told you they cannot be forced, but they voluntarily put themselves into his hands), and, arriving at the extremity of their death under this perverse lordship, they await no other judgement than that of their own conscience, and desperately, despairingly, come to eternal damnation. Wherefore hell, through their hate, surges up to them in the extremity of death, and before they get there, they take hold of it, by means of their lord the devil. As the righteous, who have lived in charity and died in love, if they have lived perfectly in virtue, illuminated with the light of faith, with perfect hope in the blood of the Lamb, when the extremity of death comes, see the good which I have prepared for them, and embrace it with the arms of love, holding fast with pressure of love to me, the Supreme and Eternal Good. And so they taste eternal life before they have left the mortal body, that is, before the soul be separated from the body. Others who have passed their lives, and have arrived at the last extremity of death with an ordinary charity (not in that great perfection), embrace my mercy with the same light of faith and hope that had those perfect ones, but in them it is imperfect, for, because they were imperfect, they constrained my mercy, counting my mercy greater than their sins. The wicked sinners do the contrary, for, seeing, with desperation, their destination, they embrace it with hatred, as I told thee. So that neither the one nor the other waits for judgement, but, in departing this life, they receive every one their place, as I have told thee, and they taste it and possess it before they depart from the body, at the extremity of death—the damned with hatred and with despair, and the perfect ones with love and the light of faith and with the hope of the blood. And the imperfect arrive at the place of purgatory, with mercy and the same faith."

CHAPTER XLIV

How the devil gets hold of souls, under pretence of some good: and how those are deceived who keep by the river, and not by the aforesaid Bridge, for, wishing to fly pains, they fall into them; and of the vision of a tree, that this soul once had.

"I HAVE told thee that the devil invites men to the water of death, that is, to that which he has, and, blinding them with the pleasures and conditions of the world, he catches them with the hook of pleasure, under the pretence of good, because in no other way could he catch them, for they would not allow themselves to be caught if they saw that no good or pleasure to themselves were to be obtained thereby. For the soul, from her nature, always relishes good, though it is true that the soul, blinded by self-love, does not know and discern what is true good, and of profit to the soul and to the body. And therefore the devil, seeing them blinded by self-love, iniquitously places before them diverse and various delights, coloured so as to have the appearance of some benefit or good; and he gives to everyone according to his condition and those principal vices to which he sees him to be most disposed—of one kind to the secular, of another to the religious, and others to prelates and noblemen, according to their different conditions. I have told thee this, because I now speak to thee of those who drown themselves in the river, and who care for nothing but themselves, to love themselves to my injury, and will relate to thee their end.

"Now, I want to show thee how they deceive themselves, and how, wishing to flee troubles, they fall into them. For, because it seems to them that following me, that is, walking by the way of the Bridge, the Word, my Son, is great toil, they draw back, fearing the thorn. This is because they are blinded and do not know or see the truth, as, thou knowest, I showed thee in the beginning of thy life, when thou didst pray me to have mercy on the world, and draw it out of the darkness of mortal

sin. Thou knowest that I then showed thee myself under the figure of a tree, of which thou sawest neither the beginning nor the end, so that thou didst not see that the roots were united with the earth of your humanity. At the foot of the tree, if thou rememberest well, there was a certain thorn, from which thorn all those who love their own sensuality kept away, and ran to a mountain of Lolla, in which thou didst figure to thyself all the delights of the world. That Lolla seemed to be of corn and was not, and therefore, as thou didst see, many souls thereon died of hunger, and many, recognising the deceits of the world, returned to the tree and passed the thorn, which is the deliberation of the will. Which deliberation, before it is made, is a thorn which appears to man to stand in the way of following the Truth. And conscience always fights on one side, and sensuality on the other; but as soon as he, with hatred and displeasure of himself, manfully makes up his mind, saying, 'I wish to follow Christ crucified,' he breaks at once the thorn, and finds inestimable sweetness, as I showed thee then, some finding more and some less, according to their disposition and desire. And thou knowest that then I said to thee, 'I am your God, unmoving and unchangeable,' and I do not draw away from any creature who wants to come to me. I have shown them the Truth, making myself visible to them, and I have shown them what it is to love anything without me. But they, as if blinded by the fog of disordinate love, know neither me nor themselves. Thou seest how deceived they are, choosing rather to die of hunger than to pass a little thorn. And they cannot escape enduring pain, for no one can pass through this life without a cross, far less those who travel by the lower way. Not that my servants pass without pain, but their pain is alleviated. And because—by sin, as I said to thee above—the world germinates thorns and tribulations, and because this river flows with tempestuous waters, I gave you the Bridge, so that you might not be drowned.

"I have shown thee how they are deceived by a disordinate fear, and how I am your God, immovable, who

am not an acceptor of persons but of holy desire. And this I have shown thee under the figure of the tree, as I told thee."

CHAPTER XLV

How, the world having germinated thorns, who those are whom they do not harm; although no one passes this life without pain.

"Now I want to show thee to whom the thorns and tribulations, that the world germinated through sin, do harm, and to whom they do not. And as, so far, I have shown thee the damnation of sinners, together with my goodness, and have told thee how they are deceived by their own sensuality, now I wish to tell thee how it is only they themselves who are injured by the thorns. No one born passes this life without pain, bodily or mental. Bodily pain my servants bear, but their minds are free, that is, they do not feel the weariness of the pain; for their will is accorded with mine, and it is the will that gives trouble to man. Pain of mind and of body have those, of whom I have narrated to thee, who in this life taste the earnest money of hell, as my servants taste the earnest money of eternal life. Knowest thou what is the special good of the blessed ones? It is having their desire filled with what they desire; wherefore desiring me, they have me, and taste me without any revolt, for they have left the burden of the body, which was a law that opposed the spirit, and came between it and the perfect knowledge of the truth, preventing it from seeing me face to face. But after the soul has left the weight of the body, her desire is full, for, desiring to see me, she sees me, in which vision is her bliss; and seeing she knows, and knowing she loves, and loving she tastes me, Supreme and Eternal Good, and in tasting me she is satisfied, and her desire is fulfilled, that is, the desire she had to see and know me; wherefore desiring she has, and having she desires. And as I told thee pain is far from the desire, and weari-

ness from the satisfaction of it. So thou seest that my servants are blessed principally in seeing and in knowing me, in which vision and knowledge their will is fulfilled, for they have that which they desired to have, and so are they satisfied. Wherefore I told thee that the tasting of eternal life consisted especially in having that which the will desires, and thus being satisfied; but know that the will is satisfied in seeing and knowing me, as I have told thee. In this life then, they taste the earnest money of eternal life, tasting the above, with which I have told thee they will be satisfied.

"But how have they the earnest money in this present life? I reply to thee, they have it in seeing my goodness in themselves, and in the knowledge of my truth, which knowledge the intellect (which is the eye of the soul) illuminated in me, possesses. This eye has the pupil of the most holy faith, which light of faith enables the soul to discern, to know, and to follow the way and the doctrine of my truth—the Word incarnate; and without this pupil of faith she would not see, except as a man who has the form of the eye, but who has covered the pupil (which causes the eye to see) with a cloth. So the pupil of the intellect is faith, and if the soul has covered it with the cloth of infidelity, drawn over it by self-love, she does not see, but only has the form of the eye without the light, because she has hidden it. Thus thou seest, that in seeing they know, and in knowing they love, and in loving they deny and lose their self-will. Their own will lost, they clothe themselves in mine, and I will nothing but your sanctification. At once they set to, turning their back to the way below, and begin to ascend by the Bridge, and pass over the thorns, which do not hurt them, their feet being shod with the affection of my love. For I told thee that my servants suffered corporally but not mentally, because the sensitive will, which gives pain and afflicts the mind of the creature, is dead. Wherefore the will not being there, neither is there any pain. They bear everything with reverence, deeming themselves favoured in having tribulation for my sake, and they desire nothing

but what I desire. If I allow the devil to trouble them, permitting temptations to prove them in virtue, as I told thee above, they resist with their will fortified in me, humiliating themselves, and deeming themselves unworthy of peace and quiet of mind and deserving of pain, and so they proceed with cheerfulness and self-knowledge, without painful affliction. And if tribulations on man's account, or infirmity, or poverty, or change of worldly condition, or loss of children, or of other much loved creatures (all of which are thorns that the earth produced after sin) come upon them, they endure them all with the light of reason and holy faith, looking to me, who am the Supreme Good, and who cannot desire other than good, for which I permit these tribulations through love, and not through hatred. And they that love me recognise this, and, examining themselves, they see their sins, and understand by the light of faith that good must be rewarded and evil punished. And they see that every little sin merits infinite pain, because it is against me, who am Infinite Good, wherefore they deem themselves favoured because I wish to punish them in this life, and in this finite time; they drive away sin with contrition of heart, and with perfect patience do they merit, and their labours are rewarded with infinite good. Hereafter they know that all labour in this life is small, on account of the shortness of time. Time is as the point of a needle and no more; and when time has passed labour is ended, therefore thou seest that the labour is small. They endure with patience, and the thorns they pass through do not touch their heart, because their heart is drawn out of them and united to me by the affection of love. It is a good truth then that these do taste eternal life, receiving the earnest money of it in this life, and that, though they walk on thorns, they are not pricked, because as I told thee, they have known my supreme goodness, and sought for it where it was to be found, that is in the Word, my only-begotten Son."

CHAPTER XLVI

Of the evils which proceed from the blindness of the intellect; and how good works not done in a state of grace are not profitable for eternal life.

"I HAVE told thee this, so that thou shouldest know well how these, of whose delusion I have been speaking to thee, taste the earnest money of hell. Now I will tell thee whence proceeds their delusion, and how they receive that earnest money. They are deluded in that they have blinded the eye of their intellect with infidelity, arising from self-love, because, as every truth is acquired by the light of faith, so by infidelity is acquired every kind of lying deceit. I speak of the infidelity of those who have received Holy Baptism, through which the pupil of faith was placed in the eye of their intellect, and as a result of which, on arriving at the age of discretion, if they have exercised themselves rightly in virtue, they have preserved the light of faith. Wherefore they give birth to living virtues, bringing forth fruit by means of their neighbour, like a woman, who, bringing forth a child alive, brings it living to her husband; so should they bring their virtues living to me, who am the husband of the soul. But these wretches do the contrary, for when they have arrived at the age of discretion, at which time they should, by the exercise of the light of faith, bring their virtues living to the birth of grace, they bring them forth stillborn. Their virtues are dead because all their works are dead, having been performed in mortal sin, and without the light of faith.

"Such as these have indeed the form of Holy Baptism, but not the light thereof, of which they have deprived themselves, through the cloud of sins they have committed, through self-love which has covered the pupil of their eye. To such as these is it said, *Those who have faith without works are dead*. Wherefore as the dead do not see, neither can such a man see, because the pupil of his eye has been darkened, as I have told thee, nor does he know

that he remains in the sins which he has committed. He does not recognise in himself my goodness, whence he has received being and every other grace that he possesses. Wherefore, not recognising me in himself, he does not hate his own sensuality, but rather loves it, seeking to satisfy his appetite, and so brings forth the dead offspring of many mortal sins. He does not love me, and not loving me, does not love what I love, that is to say, his neighbour, and does not delight in doing what pleases me, wherein consists true and real virtue, which it pleases me to see in him, not because such virtue profits me, for nothing can profit me, I being he without whom nothing is done except sin (which is nothing, inasmuch as it deprives the soul of grace and of me, who am Every Good). It is rather on account of their own profit that the virtues of men please me, for I have the wherewithal to reward them in everlasting life. Thou seest, then, that the faith of these wretches is dead, because it is without works, those which they perform not meriting for them eternal life, because they are deprived of the life of grace. Nevertheless, a man should not leave off doing good, either with or without grace, for, just as every sin is punished, so is all good rewarded. The good which is done in a state of grace merits eternal life, and the good done out of grace is rewarded in various ways, as I told thee above; for sometimes I lend them time for repentance, or put into the hearts of my servants to continue intercessions for them, by means of which they often escape from their sins and miseries. Sometimes, through the disposition of my grace, they receive neither prayers nor time, but are rewarded with temporal things, being treated like animals that are fatted for the slaughter. Therefore such as these, who, having always kicked against my goodness, nevertheless do some good, not in a state of grace, but in sin, and have not profited in their works either by time, or by prayers, or any of the other ways in which I have called them, being reproved by me for their sins (my goodness wishing nevertheless to reward their works, that is, that little service which they have done),

they are rewarded by me with temporal things on which they fatten, and, not correcting themselves, they arrive at eternal punishment. So thou seest they are deceived. Who has deceived them? They themselves, because they have deprived themselves of the light of living faith, and walk like blind men groping, and attach themselves to that which they touch. But because they do not see, except with a blind eye, they place their affections on transitory things, therefore are they deceived and act like madmen, who look only at the glitter of the gold, and not at the hidden poison. Wherefore know that the things of the world and all its delights and pleasures they have seized and possessed, without me, but with disordinate love of self, and these things are like the scorpion which I showed thee in the beginning, after the figure of the tree, telling thee that it carries gold in front and venom behind, and that the venom was not without the gold, nor the gold without the venom, but that the gold was seen first, and that no one preserved himself from the venom, except those who were illuminated by the light of faith."

CHAPTER XLVII

How the commandments cannot be observed by those who do not observe the counsels; and how every state which a man may choose, if he have a good and holy will, is pleasing to God.

"I HAVE told thee of those, who, with the knife of two blades (that is, hatred of vice and love of virtue), for love of me cut out the venom of their own sensuality, and, with the light of reason, held and possessed and acquired the gold contained in those mundane things that they desired to keep. But he who desires to practise great perfection despises them in deed as well as in thought. These are they, as I told thee, who observe the counsel actually, which was given to them and left by my Truth. And those who retain possession of the things of the world are those who observe the commandments in action, but the

counsels in thought only, and not in deed. For inasmuch as the counsels are bound up in the commandments, no one can observe the latter who does not observe the former, at least in thought, that is to say, that they possess the riches of the world humbly and without pride, as lent to them and not their own; for they are only given to you for your use through my goodness, since you only possess what I give you, and can only retain what I allow you to retain. I give you as much of them as I see to be profitable for your salvation, and in this way should you use them, for a man, so using them, observes the commandment, loving me above everything, and his neighbour as himself; for he lives with a pure divested heart, casting riches away from himself in desire and love, and only possessing them in accordance with my will. Such a man therefore, though he possess his riches in deed, observes the counsel in thought, having cut out of his heart the poison of disordinate love and affection. Such as these are in common charity. But those who observe the commandments and counsels in deed as well as in thought are in perfect charity.

"With true simplicity they observe the counsel which my Truth, the Word incarnate, gave to that young man who asked, saying: *What must I do, Master, to inherit eternal life?* to whom he replied, *Observe the commandments of the Law*, and the young man answering, said, *I have observed them.* Jesus then said: *It is well; now, if thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor.* And the young man was sad, because he still held his riches with too much love.

"But these perfect ones observe that counsel, abandoning the world with its pleasures, macerating the body with penance and with watching, with humility and continual prayers. The others, dwelling in common charity, who do not raise themselves above their worldly possessions in deed, do not on that account lose eternal life, inasmuch as they are not fettered by them. But, if they wish to possess the things of the world, they should do so in the way that I have told thee, and they do not offend in so possessing

them, because everything is good and perfect, and created by me, who am the Supreme Good, for the service of my rational creatures; not that my rational creatures may become the slaves and servants of the delights of the world, but that, if it pleases them to hold worldly possessions (not desiring to go on to the great perfection), they may hold them not as their servants but as their lords. And they should give their love and desire to me, possessing every other thing, not as their own, but as lent to them, as I told thee. For I am no acceptor of creatures, or of conditions, but rather of holy desires; wherefore, in whatever condition a man may choose to be, he may have a good and holy will and be pleasing to me. But who will possess in this way? Those who have destroyed the venom, with hatred of their own sensuality and love of virtue. Having destroyed the venom of disordinate desire, and ruled it with love and fear of me, a man can choose and hold the condition he prefers, and in either he will be capable of receiving eternal life, although the greater perfection and the more pleasing to me, be to raise himself in deed as well as in thought from everything of the world. But he who does not wish to rise to this perfection, his fragility not allowing him to do so, can remain in the ordinary state, according to his vocation, and this my goodness has ordered so that no one may have excuse for sinning, whatever his condition may be. And truly they have no excuse, because I have condescended to their passions and weaknesses in such a way that they, wishing to remain in the world, can do so, possessing riches, retaining their dignities, living in the state of matrimony, bringing up their children, and striving for them, and remaining in whatever condition they may choose, provided that they truly cut out the venom of their own sensuality, which gives eternal death. And rightly is their own sensuality called venom, because, as a sting gives pain to the body, and finally causes its death unless it is cast out, or some medicine taken, so does the scorpion of worldly delight to the soul; not that temporal things, in themselves, contain any venom, for they are good and

made by me, who am Supreme Good, and therefore can be used as man pleases with holy fear and true love, but I am speaking of the sting of the perverse will of man. I say, then, that it envenoms the soul and gives it death, unless it is drawn out of the heart and the affection, and vomited by holy confession, for confession is a medicine which cures this sting, though it seems bitter to sensual self-love. Thou seest then how deluded are they who can possess and have me, fleeing sadness and obtaining cheerfulness and consolation, and who, nevertheless, desire evil under colour of good, and give themselves up to the acquiring of gold with disordinate love. But, because they are blinded with much infidelity, feeling themselves envenomed, yet not perceiving how they are stung, they take not the remedy, and bear the cross of the devil, tasting the earnest money of hell."

CHAPTER XLVIII

How worldly men cannot be satisfied with their possessions; and of the suffering their perverse will causes them even in this life.

"I TOLD thee, above, that the will alone is the cause of man's pain, and because my servants are deprived of their own will, and clothed with mine, they do not feel afflicting pain, but are satisfied, feeling me by grace in their souls, and if they possessed the whole world without me they could not be satisfied, because the things created are less than man—for they are made for man, and not man for them—and therefore can he not be satisfied by them, but by me alone. Wherefore these miserable ones in great blindness are always striving and are never satisfied, desiring that which they cannot have, because they do not ask of me, who alone can satisfy. Wilt thou that I tell thee what their pain is? Thou knowest that love always gives pain, when that thing to which the soul has become conformed is lost. These have become conformed to the earth, through love, in diverse ways, wherefore earth they

have become; some are conformed to riches, some to worldly rank, some to their children, some lose me by serving creatures, some make of their body a brute beast through their great filthiness, and so, in various ways, they desire and feed themselves on earth, and they would that things were lasting, but they are not, but pass like the wind; for either they fail them at the moment of death, or else they are deprived of what they love by my dispensation. And, being deprived, they suffer intolerable pain, and their loss causes them as much grief as they had disordinate love when they possessed them. Had they held them as things lent to them, and not as their own, they would leave them without pain. They have pain then, because they have not what they desire. Because, as I told thee, the world cannot satisfy them, and, being unsatisfied, they suffer. How great is the pain of the prick of conscience! How great is his pain who thirsts for revenge, which pain continually gnaws him and causes him to die, before he has killed his enemy with the knife of hatred! How much pain the miser endures, who through avarice cuts down his needs! How much torment the envious man endures, for envy always gnaws his heart, and does not allow him to take delight in the well-being of his neighbour! From everything, which a man loves sensually, he draws pain with many disordinate fears. Wherefore, such as these have taken the cross of the devil, tasting the earnest money of hell, on which they live in this life, with many and diverse sicknesses, and if they do not correct themselves they will afterwards receive eternal death.

"These are injured by the thorns of many tribulations, torturing themselves with their own disordinate will, who carry the cross in heart and in body, that is, with pain and torment, the soul and the body pass their time without any merit, because they bear not their labours with patience, but rather with impatience. And because they have possessed and acquired the gold of the delights of the world with disordinate love, being deprived of the life of grace, and of the affection of charity, they have become

trees of death. And therefore all their works are dead, and with pain they go through the river, being drowned, and arrive at the water of death, passing with hatred through the gate of the devil, and receive eternal damnation. Now thou hast seen how they deceive themselves, and with how much pain they go to hell, making themselves martyrs of the devil. And thou hast seen what it is that blinds them, namely, the cloud of self-love, hiding the pupil of the light of faith. And thou hast seen how the tribulations of the world, from whatever side they come, injure my servants corporally, but not mentally, because they, being conformed to my will, are contented to suffer pain for me. But the servants of the world are hurt within and without, and particularly within, by fear, that is, fear of losing that which they possess, and by love, that is, the desire for that which they cannot have. All the other suffering which proceeds from these two principal causes, thy tongue is not sufficient to relate.

"Thou seest, then, that even in this life the righteous have a better bargain than the sinners, and thou hast fully seen how they walk and what is their end."

CHAPTER XLIX

How servile fear is not sufficient to give eternal life; and how, by the exercise of this fear, one arrives at the love of virtue.

"NOW I say to thee that there are some few who, feeling themselves spurred by the tribulations of the world (which I give in order that the soul may know that her end is not in this life, and that things are imperfect and transitory, and that she may desire me who am her end), begin to lift the cloud off themselves, on account of the suffering that sin causes them, and which they see must follow sin. With this servile fear they begin to come out of the river, vomiting the poison which was flung to them by the scorpion under the appearance of gold, and which they took without moderation, receiving thereby poison, and,

arising, take the direction of the bank to attach themselves to the Bridge.

"But it does not suffice to go with servile fear alone, for to sweep out the house of mortal sin, without filling it with virtue, founded in love and not in fear, will not give eternal life. Man must put both feet on the first step of the Bridge, that is, affection and desire, which are the feet that carry the soul into the love of my truth, of whom I have made for you a Bridge. This servile fear is the first step, which I told thee would have to be ascended, when I told thee how he had made a staircase of his body, and it is indeed true, that it is almost always the first step that the servants of the world take, arising, first, through the fear of pain. The world begins to displease them, sometimes on account of its tribulations, and sometimes because they become tedious to themselves. If they exercise this fear with the light of faith, they will pass on to the love of virtue.

"But there are some who proceed with such half-heartedness that oftentimes they turn in again, because, having arrived at the bank, and contrary winds arising, they are struck by the waves of the tempestuous sea of this dark life. And if the wind of prosperity arrives, a man, not having, through negligence, mounted, with affection and the love of virtue, the first great step, turns his head back to the pleasures of the world with disordinate delight. If the wind of adversity blows, he turns back through impatience, because he has not hated his sin on account of the injury it has done to me, but on account of the fear of pain it causes to him, with which fear alone he had arisen from the vomit. All practice of virtue requires perseverance, and if a man does not persevere he will not attain his desire, which is to arrive at the end for which he began. Wherefore to fulfil his desire he needs perseverance.

"I have told thee that they turn back on account of the diverse contrary winds that arise against them, or the warring of their own sensuality against the Spirit, or because they turn to creatures, loving them with dis-

ordinate love apart from me, or on account of impatience of injury, or the devil makes them turn back through many and diverse battles, and sometimes through contempt, bringing them to confusion, saying:

"'This good which thou hast begun to practise is not worth so much to thee as thy sins and faults,' which he says to make them turn back and abandon the little practice of virtue which they had begun. And sometimes he makes them turn back through love of pleasure, telling them to hope in my mercy, saying: 'Why harass thyself? Enjoy this life, and in the extremity of death, recognising thy sins, thou shalt receive mercy.' And so, in this way, the devil causes them to lose the fear with which they had begun. For these and many other things they turn back and are not constant or persevering, and all this befalls them because the roots of self-love are by no means ploughed up in them, and they take hold of the hope of my mercy, not as they ought, but with great presumption, seizing that which they continually offend. I have not given, and do not give, my mercy in order that men may offend in the hope of it, but in order that they may defend themselves with it from the malice of the devil, and from disordinate confusion of mind. But they who offend with the arm of mercy do quite the contrary, and it is because they have not persevered in the first change they made, arising, through the fear of pain and the pricks of the thorns of many tribulations, from the misery of mortal sin. Wherefore, not having made the first change, they do not attain to the love of virtue, and therefore do they not persevere.

"The soul that does not change her course does not proceed, and if she proceeds not, she turns back, so that such as these, of whom I have been speaking to thee, not proceeding with virtue, nor arising from the imperfections of fear and attaining to love, must needs turn back."

CHAPTER L

How this soul was in great bitterness, on account of the blindness of those who are drowned below in the river.

THEN that soul, tormented by desire, considering her own imperfections and those of others, was saddened to hear of and to see the great blindness of creatures, notwithstanding the great goodness of GOD, in having placed nothing in this life, no matter in what condition, that could be an impediment to the salvation of creatures, but rather arranged for the exercising and proving of virtue in them. And notwithstanding all this, she saw them, through self-love and disordinate affection, go under by the river and arrive at eternal damnation, and many who were in the river and had begun to come out, turn back again, scandalised at her, because they had heard of the sweet goodness of GOD, who had deigned to manifest himself to her. And for this she was in bitterness, and fixing the eye of her intellect on the Eternal Father, she said: "O Inestimable Love, great is the delusion of thy creatures. I would that, when it is pleasing to thy goodness, thou wouldst more clearly explain to me the three steps figured in the body of thy only Son, and what method should be used so as to come entirely out of the depths and to keep the way of thy truth, and who are those who ascend the staircase."

CHAPTER LI

How the three steps figured in the Bridge, that is, in the Son of GOD, signify the three powers of the soul.

THEN the Divine Goodness, regarding with the eye of his mercy the hunger and desire of that soul, said: "O my most delightful daughter, I am not a Despiser, but the Fulfiller of holy desire, and therefore I will show and declare to thee that which thou askest me. Thou askest

me to explain to thee the figure of the three steps, and to tell thee what method they who want to come out of the river must use, to be able to ascend the Bridge. And, although above, in relating to thee the delusion and blindness of men, tasting in this life the earnest-money of hell, and, as martyrs of the devil, receiving damnation, I showed thee the methods they should use; nevertheless now I will declare it to thee more fully, satisfying thy desire. Thou knowest that every evil is founded in self-love, and that self-love is a cloud that takes away the light of reason, which reason holds in itself the light of faith, and one is not lost without the other. The soul I created in my image and similitude, giving her memory, intellect, and will. The intellect is the most noble part of the soul, and is moved by the affection, and nourishes it, and the hand of love—that is, the affection—fills the memory with the remembrance of me and of the benefits received, which it does with care and gratitude, and so one power spurs on another, and the soul is nourished in the life of grace.

"The soul cannot live without love, but always wants to love something, because she is made of love, and by love I created her. And therefore I told thee that the affection moved the intellect, saying, as it were, '*I will love, because the food on which I feed is love.*' Then the intellect, feeling itself awakened by the affection, says, as it were, 'If thou wilt love, I will give thee that which thou canst love.' And at once it arises, considering carefully the dignity of the soul, and the indignity into which she has fallen through sin. In the dignity of her being it tastes my inestimable goodness, and the increate charity with which I created her, and in contemplating her misery, it discovers and tastes my mercy, and sees how, through mercy, I have lent her time and drawn her out of darkness. Then the affection nourishes itself in love, opening the mouth of holy desire, with which it eats hatred and displeasure of its own sensuality, united with true humility and perfect patience, which it drew from holy hatred. The virtues conceived, they give birth to themselves perfectly and imperfectly, according as the soul

exercises perfection in herself, as I will tell thee below. So, on the contrary, if the sensual affection wants to love sensual things, the eye of the intellect sets before itself for its sole object transitory things, with self-love, displeasure of virtue, and love of vice, whence she draws pride and impatience, and the memory is filled with nothing but that which the affection presents to it. This love so dazzles the eye of the intellect that it can discern and see nothing but such glittering objects. It is the very brightness of the things that causes the intellect to perceive them and the affection to love them; for had worldly things no such brightness there would be no sin, for man, by his nature, cannot desire anything but good, and vice, appearing to him thus, under colour of the soul's good, causes him to sin. But because the eye, on account of its blindness, does not discern, and knows not the truth, it errs, seeking good and delights there where they are not.

"I have already told thee that the delights of the world, without me, are venomous thorns, and that the vision of the intellect is deluded by them, and the affection of the will is deluded into loving them, and the memory into retaining remembrance of them. The unity of these powers of the soul is so great that I cannot be offended by one without all the others offending me at the same time, because the one presents to the other, as I told thee, good or evil, according to the pleasure of the free will. This free will is bound to the affection, and it moves as it pleases, either with the light of reason or without it. Your reason is attached to me when your will does not, by disordinate love, cut it off from me; you have also in you the law of perversity, that continually fights against the Spirit. You have, then, two parts in you—sensuality and reason. Sensuality is appointed to be the servant, so that, with the instrument of the body, you may prove and exercise the virtues. The soul is free, liberated from sin by the blood of my Son, and she cannot be dominated unless she consent with her will, which is controlled by her free choice, and when this free choice agrees with the will, it becomes one thing with it. And I tell thee truly that,

when the soul undertakes to gather together, with the hand of free choice, her powers in my name, then are assembled all the actions, both spiritual and temporal, that the creature can do, and free choice gets rid of sensuality and binds itself with reason. I, then, by grace, rest in the midst of them; and this is what my truth, the Word Incarnate, meant, when he said: '*When there are two or three or more gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*' And this is the truth. I have already told thee that no one could come to me except by him, and therefore did I make of him a Bridge with three steps. And those three steps figure, as I will narrate to thee below, the three states of the soul."

CHAPTER LII

How if the three aforesaid powers are not united, there cannot be perseverance, without which no man arrives at his end.

"I HAVE explained to thee the figure of the three steps, in general, as the three powers of the soul, and no one who wishes to pass by the Bridge and doctrine of my Truth can mount one without the other, and the soul cannot persevere except by the union of her three powers. Of which I told thee above, when thou askedst me, how the voyagers could come out of the river. There are two goals, and for the attainment of either, perseverance is needful—they are vice and virtue. If thou desire to arrive at life, thou must persevere in virtue, and if thou would have eternal death, thou must persevere in vice. Thus it is with perseverance that they who want life arrive at me who am Life, and with perseverance that they who taste the water of death arrive at the devil."

CHAPTER LIII

An exposition on Christ's words: *" Whosoever thirsteth, let him come to me and drink."*

" YOU were all invited, generally and in particular, by my Truth, when he cried in the Temple, saying: '*Whosoever thirsteth, let him come to me and drink, for I am the Fountain of the Water of Life.*' He did not say: '*Go to the Father and drink,*' but he said, '*Come to me.*' He spoke thus because in me, the Father, there can be no pain, but in my Son there can be pain. And you, while you are pilgrims and wayfarers in this mortal life, cannot be without pain, because the earth, through sin, brought forth thorns. And why did he say '*Let him come to me and drink*'? Because whoever follows his doctrine, whether in the most perfect way or by dwelling in the life of common charity, finds to drink, tasting the fruit of the blood, through the union of the divine nature with the human nature. And you, finding yourselves in him, find yourselves also in me, who am the Sea Pacific, because I am one thing with him, and he with me. So that you are invited to the Fountain of Living Water of Grace, and it is right for you, with perseverance, to keep by him who is made for you a Bridge, not being turned back by any contrary wind that may arise, either of prosperity or adversity, and to persevere till you find me, who am the Giver of the Water of Life, by means of this sweet and amorous Word, my only-begotten Son. And why did he say: '*I am the Fountain of Living Water*'? Because he was the Fountain which contained me, the Giver of the Living Water, by means of the union of the divine with the human nature. Why did he say '*Come to me and drink*'? Because you cannot pass this mortal life without pain, and in me, the Father, there can be no pain, but in him there can be pain, and therefore of him did I make for you a Bridge. No one can come to me except by him, as he told you in the words: '*No one can come to the Father except by me.*'

"Now thou hast seen to what way thou shouldest keep, and how, namely with perseverance, otherwise thou shalt not drink, for perseverance receives the crown of glory and victory in the life everlasting."

CHAPTER LIV

The general method by which every rational creature can come out of the sea of the world, and go by the aforesaid holy Bridge.

"I WILL now return to the three steps, which you must climb in order to issue from the river without drowning, and attain to the Living Water, to which you are invited, and to desire my presence in the midst of you. For in this way, in which you should follow, I am in your midst, reposing, by grace, in your souls. In order to have desire to mount the steps, you must have thirst, because only those who thirst are invited: '*Whosoever thirsteth, let him come to me and drink.*' He who has no thirst will not persevere, for either fatigue causes him to stop, or pleasure, and he does not care to carry the vessel with which he may get the water, and neither does he care for the company, and alone he cannot go, and he turns back at the smallest prick of persecution, for he loves it not. He is afraid because he is alone; were he accompanied he would not fear, and had he ascended the three steps he would not have been alone, and would, therefore, have been secure. You must then have thirst and gather yourselves together, as it is said, '*two or three or more.*'

"Why is it said '*two or three or more*'? Because there are not two without three, nor three without two, neither three nor two without more. The number one is excluded, for, unless a man has a companion, I cannot be in the midst; this is no indifferent trifle, for he who is wrapped up in self-love is solitary.

"Why is he solitary? Because he is separated from my grace and the love of his neighbour, and being, by sin, deprived of me, he turns to that which is nought, because

I am he that is. So that he who is solitary, that is, who is alone in self-love, is not mentioned by my Truth and is not acceptable to me. He says then: '*If there be two or three or more gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them.*' I said to thee that two were not without three, nor three without two, and so it is. Thou knowest that the commandments of the Law are completely contained in two, and if these two are not observed the Law is not observed. The two commandments are to love me above everything, and thy neighbour as thyself, which two are the beginning, the middle and the end of the Law. These two cannot be gathered together in my name, without three, that is, without the congregation of the powers of the soul, the memory, the intellect and the will; the memory to retain the remembrance of my benefits and my goodness, the intellect to gaze into the ineffable love which I have shown thee by means of my only-begotten Son, whom I have placed as the object of the vision of your intellect, so that in him you behold the fire of my charity, and the will to love and desire me, who am your end. When these virtues and powers of the soul are congregated together in my name, I am in the midst of them by grace, and a man who is full of my love and that of his neighbour, suddenly finds himself the companion of many and royal virtues. Then the appetite of the soul is disposed to thirst. Thirst, I say, for virtue, and the honour of my name and salvation of souls, and his every other thirst is spent and dead, and he then proceeds securely without any servile fear, having ascended the first step of the affection, for the affection, stripped of self-love, mounts above itself and above transitory things, or, if he will still hold them, he does so according to my will—that is, with a holy and true fear, and love of virtue. He then finds that he has attained to the second step—that is, to the light of the intellect, which is, through Christ crucified, mirrored in cordial love of me, for through him have I shown my love to man. He finds peace and quiet, because the memory is filled with my love. Thou knowest that an empty thing, when touched, resounds, but not so

when it is full. So memory, being filled with the light of the intellect, and the affection with love, on being moved by the tribulations or delights of the world, will not resound with disordinate merriment or with impatience, because they are full of me, who am very good.

"Having climbed the three steps, he finds that the three powers of the soul have been gathered together by his reason in my name. And his soul, having gathered together the two commandments, that is, love of me and of the neighbour, finds herself accompanied by me, who am her strength and security, and walks safely because I am in the midst of her. Wherefore then he follows on with anxious desire, thirsting after the way of Truth, in which way he finds the Fountain of the Water of Life, through his thirst for my honour and his own salvation and that of his neighbour, without which thirst he would not be able to arrive at the Fountain. He walks on, carrying the vessel of the heart, emptied of every affection and disordinate love of the world, but filled immediately it is emptied with other things, for nothing can remain empty, and, being without disordinate love for transitory things, it is filled with love of celestial things, and sweet divine love, with which he arrives at the Fountain of the Water of Life, and passes through the door of Christ crucified, and tastes the Water of Life, finding himself in me, the Sea Pacific."

CHAPTER LV

A brief repetition of some things already said.

"I HAVE now shown thee the general method that every rational creature should follow, in order to come out of the sea of the world, without being drowned, and escape eternal damnation. I have also shown thee the three general steps, that is, the three powers of the soul, and how one cannot ascend one without ascending them all. And I have spoken to thee of those words of my Truth: '*Where two or three or more are gathered together in my name*,'

telling thee that this means the gathering together of the three steps, that is, of the three powers of the soul, which three powers, being united, have with them the two principal commandments of the Law, that is, love of me and of the neighbour. Then, the staircase being mounted, that is, gathered together in my name, as I have said, man immediately thirsts for the Living Water, and sets off and passes over the Bridge, following the doctrine of my Truth, who is this Bridge, and runs, in reply to his voice, which called you, as I told thee above, in the Temple inviting you all, saying: '*Whosoever thirsteth, let him come to me and drink, for I am the Fountain of the Water of Life.*' I have explained to thee what he meant, and how these words are to be understood, in order that thou mayest the better see the abundance of my love, and the confusion of those who, deceived by what appears to be pleasure, run the way of the devil, who invites them to the water of death.

"Now thou hast seen and heard what thou askedst of me, and I have told thee what method should be held, so as not to drown in the river, namely to mount by the Bridge, carrying the heart and the affection like a vessel to me, who will give to drink to him who asks of me, and to keep the way of Christ crucified, with perseverance, until death. This is that method which every man should follow, no matter what be his condition. No man can draw back, saying: 'I have such and such a position, or children, or other worldly reasons, for which I draw back from following this way,' for I have already told thee that every condition is pleasing and acceptable to me, provided it be held with a holy and good will, for everything is good and perfect and made by me, who am Supreme Good, and I did not create nor give anything by which man could be brought to death, but everything was made to lead him to life. I ask an easy thing of you, for nothing is so easy and delightful as love, and what I require of you is none other than love of me and of the neighbour. This you can fulfil in every time and in every place and in every condition, provided it be held to the

praise and glory of my name. Thou knowest that I told thee that it was through their delusion, and walking without the Light, being clothed in self-love, and possessing and loving things and creatures without me, that some pass through this life in torture, being insupportable to themselves, and unless they rise above themselves in the aforesaid way, they will arrive at eternal damnation.

"Now I have told thee what general method every man should hold to come out of the river."

CHAPTER LVI

How GOD, wishing to show to this devoted soul that the three steps of the holy Bridge signify in particular the three states of the soul, tells her that she should rise above herself, to consider this truth.

"As I have told thee above how they ought to walk who live in common charity, that is, observing the commandments and counsels in thought, now I wish to tell thee of those who have begun to mount the staircase, and want to follow the perfect way, that is, to observe the commandments and counsels in act, in three states, which states I will show thee now, explaining them in particular. There are three degrees and states of the soul—as there are three steps, which steps I explained to thee in general as the powers of the soul—of which one state is imperfect, one more perfect, and the other most perfect. The first state is to me as that of a mercenary servant, the second as of a faithful servant, and the other as of a son who loves me, without any consideration. These are the three states of the soul, which can and do belong to many creatures, and sometimes all to one creature. They can and do belong to one creature when, with perfect solicitude, he runs by the aforesaid way, using his time in such a way that from the servile state he arrives at the free state, and from the free state at the filial. Arise above thyself and open the eye of thy intellect and behold these travelling pilgrims as they

pass, some imperfectly and others perfectly, on the way of the commandments, and some most perfectly keeping the way of the counsels. Thou wilt see, then, whence comes imperfection, and whence comes perfection, and how greatly the soul who has not rooted out of herself the roots of self-love is deceived. For in every state in which man may be, it is necessary to destroy this self-love."

CHAPTER LVII

How this devoted soul looking in the divine mirror saw the creatures going in diverse ways.

THEN that soul, tormented with intense desire, gazing into the sweet divine mirror, saw creatures setting out to attain their end in diverse ways and with diverse considerations. She saw that many began to mount, feeling themselves pricked by servile fear, that is, fearing their own personal pain, and she saw others practising this first state, arriving at the second state, but few she saw who arrived at the greatest perfection.

CHAPTER LVIII

How servile fear is not sufficient, without the love of virtue, to give eternal life; and how the law of fear and that of love are united.

THEN the goodness of God, wishing to satisfy the desire of that soul, said, "Dost thou see those? They have arisen with servile fear from the vomit of mortal sin, but if they do not arise with love of virtue, servile fear alone is not sufficient to give eternal life. But love with holy fear is sufficient, because the law is founded in love and holy fear. The old law was the law of fear, that was given by me to Moses, by which law they who committed sin suffered the penalty of it. The new law is the law of love, given by the Word of my only-begotten Son, and is

founded in love alone. The new law does not break the old law, but rather fulfils it, as said my Truth, '*I come not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.*' And he united the law of fear with that of love. Through love was taken away the imperfection of the fear of the penalty, and the perfection of holy fear remained, that is, the fear of offending, not on account of one's own damnation, but of offending me, who am Supreme Good. So that the imperfect law was made perfect with the law of love. Wherefore, after the car of the fire of my only-begotten Son came and brought the fire of my charity into your humanity with abundance of mercy, the penalty of the sins committed by humanity was taken away, that is, he who offended was no longer punished suddenly, as was of old given and ordained in the law of Moses.

"There is, therefore, no need for servile fear; and this does not mean that sin is not punished, but that the punishment is reserved, unless, that is to say, the person punish himself in this life with perfect contrition. For, in the other life, the soul is separated from the body, wherefore while man lives is his time for mercy, but when he is dead comes the time of justice. He ought, then, to arise from servile fear, and arrive at love and holy fear of me, otherwise there is no remedy against his falling back again into the river, and reaching the waters of tribulation, and seeking the thorns of consolation, for all consolations are thorns that pierce the soul who loves them disordinately."

CHAPTER LIX

How, by exercising oneself in servile fear, which is the state of imperfection, by which is meant the first step of the holy Bridge, one arrives at the second step, which is the state of perfection.

"I TOLD thee that no one could go by the Bridge or come out of the river without climbing the three steps, which is the truth. There are some who climb imperfectly, and some perfectly, and some climb with the greatest

perfection. The first are those who are moved by servile fear, and have climbed so far being imperfectly gathered together; that is to say, the soul, having seen the punishment which follows her sin, climbs; and gathers together her memory to recollect her vice, her intellect to see the punishment which she expects to receive for her fault, and her will to move her to hate that fault. And let us consider this to be the first step and the first gathering together of the powers of the soul, which should be exercised by the light of the intellect with the pupil of the eye of holy faith, which looks not only at the punishment of sin, but at the fruit of virtue, and the love which I bear to the soul, so that she may climb with love and affection, and stripped of servile fear. And doing so, such souls will become faithful and not unfaithful servants, serving me through love and not through fear, and if, with hatred of sin, they employ their minds to dig out the root of their self love with prudence, constancy, and perseverance, they will succeed in doing so. But there are many who begin their course climbing so slowly, and render their debt to me by such small degrees, and with such negligence and ignorance, that they suddenly faint, and every little breeze catches their sails, and turns their prow backwards. Wherefore, because they imperfectly climb to the first step of the Bridge of Christ crucified, they do not arrive at the second step of his Heart."

CHAPTER LX

Of the imperfection of those who love GOD for their own profit, delight and consolation.

"SOME there are who have become faithful servants, serving me with fidelity without servile fear of punishment, but rather with love. This very love, however, if they serve me with a view to their own profit, or the delight and pleasure which they find in me, is imperfect. Dost thou know what proves the imperfection of this love?

The withdrawal of the consolations which they found in me, and the insufficiency and short duration of their love for their neighbour, which grows weak by degrees, and oft-times disappears. Towards me their love grows weak when, on occasion, in order to exercise them in virtue and raise them above their imperfection, I withdraw from their minds my consolation and allow them to fall into battles and perplexities. This I do so that, coming to perfect self-knowledge, they may know that of themselves they are nothing and have no grace, and, accordingly in time of battle fly to me as their benefactor, seeking me alone, with true humility, for which purpose I treat them thus, withdrawing from them consolation indeed, but not grace. At such a time these weak ones of whom I speak relax their energy, impatiently turning backwards, and sometimes abandon, under colour of virtue, many of their exercises, saying to themselves, *This labour does not profit me*. All this they do, because they feel themselves deprived of mental consolation. Such a soul acts imperfectly, for she has not yet unwound the bandage of spiritual self-love, for had she unwound it she would see that, in truth, everything proceeds from me, that no leaf of a tree falls to the ground without my providence, and that what I give and promise to my creatures, I give and promise to them for their sanctification, which is the good and the end for which I created them. My creatures should see and know that I wish nothing but their good, through the blood of my only-begotten Son, in which they are washed from their iniquities. By this blood they are enabled to know my Truth, how, in order to give them eternal life, I created them in my image and likeness and re-created them to grace with the blood of my Son, making them sons of adoption. But, since they are imperfect, they make use of me only for their own profit, relaxing their love for their neighbour. Thus, those in the first state come to nought through the fear of enduring pain, and those in the second, because they slacken their pace, ceasing to render service to their neighbour, and withdrawing their charity if they see their own profit or con-

solation withdrawn from them: this happens because their love was originally impure, for they gave to their neighbour the same imperfect love which they gave to me, that is to say, a love based only on desire of their own advantage. If, through a desire for perfection, they do not recognise this imperfection of theirs, it is impossible that they should not turn back. For those who desire eternal life, a pure love, prescinding from themselves, is necessary, for it is not enough for eternal life to fly sin from fear of punishment, or to embrace virtue from the motive of one's own advantage. Sin should be abandoned because it is displeasing to me, and virtue should be loved for my sake. It is true that, generally speaking, every person is first called in this way, but this is because the soul herself is at first imperfect, from which imperfection she must advance to perfection, either while she lives, by a generous love to me with a pure and virtuous heart that takes no thought for herself, or, at least, in the moment of death, recognising her own imperfection, with the purpose, had she but time, of serving me, irrespectively of herself. It was with this imperfect love that St Peter loved the sweet and good Jesus, my only-begotten Son, enjoying most pleasantly his sweet conversation, but, when the time of trouble came, he failed, and so disgraceful was his fall, that not only could he not bear any pain himself, but his terror of the very approach of pain caused him to fall, and deny the Lord, with the words, '*I have never known him.*' The soul who has climbed this step with servile fear and mercenary love alone, falls into many troubles. Such souls should arise and become sons, and serve me, irrespective of themselves, for I, who am the rewarder of every labour, render to each man according to his state and his labour; wherefore, if these souls do not abandon the exercise of holy prayer and their other good works, but go on, with perseverance, to increase their virtues, they will arrive at the state of filial love, because I respond to them with the same love with which they love me, so that if they love me as a servant does his master, I pay them their wages according to their deserts, but I do not reveal

myself to them, because secrets are revealed to a friend, who has become one thing with his friend, and not to a servant. Yet it is true, that a servant may so advance by the virtuous love which he bears to his master as to become a very dear friend, and so do some of these of whom I have spoken, but while they remain in the state of mercenary love I do not manifest myself to them. If they, through displeasure at their imperfection, and love of virtue, dig up, with hatred, the root of spiritual self-love, and mount to the throne of conscience, reasoning with themselves, so as to quell the motions of servile fear in their heart, and to correct mercenary love by the light of the holy faith, they will be so pleasing to me that they will attain to the love of the friend. And I will manifest myself to them, as my Truth said in these words: '*He who loves me shall be one thing with me and I with him, and I will manifest myself to him and we will dwell together.*' This is the state of two dear friends, for though they are two in body, yet they are one in soul through the affection of love, because love transforms the lover into the object loved, and where two friends have one soul, there can be no secret between them, wherefore my Truth said: '*I will come and we will dwell together*,' and this is the truth."

CHAPTER LXI

Of the way in which GOD manifests himself to the soul who loves him.

"KNOWEST thou how I manifest myself to the soul who loves me in truth, and follows the doctrine of my sweet and amorous Word? In many is my virtue manifested in the soul in proportion to her desire, but I make three special manifestations. The first manifestation of my virtue, that is to say, of my love and charity in the soul, is made through the Word of my Son, and shown in the blood, which he spilled with such fire of love. Now this charity is manifested in two ways; first, in general, to

ordinary people, that is to those who live in the ordinary grace of God. It is manifested to them by the many and diverse benefits which they receive from me. The second mode of manifestation, which is developed from the first, is peculiar to those who have become my friends in the way mentioned above, and is known through a sentiment of the soul, by which they taste, know, prove and feel it. This second manifestation, however, is in men themselves; they manifesting me, through the affection of their love. For though I am no acceptor of creatures, I am an acceptor of holy desires, and myself in the soul in that precise degree of perfection which she seeks in me. Sometimes I manifest myself (and this is also a part of the second manifestation) by endowing men with the spirit of prophecy, showing them the things of the future. This I do in many and diverse ways, according as I see need in the soul herself and in other creatures. At other times the third manifestation takes place. I then form in the mind the presence of the Truth, my only-begotten Son, in many ways, according to the will and the desire of the soul. Sometimes she seeks me in prayer, wishing to know my power, and I satisfy her by causing her to taste and see my virtue. Sometimes she seeks me in the wisdom of my Son, and I satisfy her by placing his wisdom before the eye of her intellect, sometimes in the clemency of the Holy Spirit, and then my goodness causes her to taste the fire of divine charity, and to conceive the true and royal virtues, which are founded on the pure love of her neighbour."

CHAPTER LXII

Why Christ did not say *I will manifest my Father,* but *I will manifest myself.*

"THOU seest now how truly my Word spoke, when he said: '*He who loves me shall be one thing with me.*' Because, by following his doctrine with the affection of love, you are united with him, and being united with

him, you are united with me, because we are one thing together. And so it is that I manifest myself to you, because we are one and the same thing together. Wherefore if my Truth said, '*I will manifest myself to you*,' he said the truth, because, in manifesting himself, he manifested me, and in manifesting me, he manifested himself. But why did he not say, '*I will manifest my Father to you*'? For three reasons in particular. First, because he wished to show that he and I are not separate from each other, on which account he also made the following reply to St Philip, when he said to him, '*Show us the Father, and it is enough for us.*' My Word said, '*Who sees me sees the Father, and who sees the Father sees me.*' This he said because he was one thing with me, and that which he had, he had from me, I having nothing from him; wherefore, again, he said to Judas, '*My doctrine is not mine, but my Father's who sent me*,' because my Son proceeds from me, not I from him, though I with him and he with me are but one thing. For this reason he did not say '*I will manifest the Father*,' but '*I will manifest myself*,' being one thing with the Father. The second reason was because, in manifesting himself to you, he did not present to you anything he had not received from me, the Father. These words, then, mean, the Father has manifested himself to me, because I am one thing with him, and I will manifest to you, by means of myself, me and him. The third reason was, because I, being invisible, could not be seen by you until you should be separated from your bodies. Then, indeed, will you see me, your GOD, and my Son, the Word, face to face. From now until after the general resurrection, when your humanity will be conformed with the humanity of the Eternal Word, according to what I told thee in the treatise of the resurrection, you can see me, with the eye of the intellect alone, for as I am you cannot see me now. Wherefore I veiled the divine nature with your humanity, so that you might see me through that medium. I, the Invisible, made myself, as it were, visible by sending you the Word, my Son, veiled in the flesh of your humanity. He manifested me

to you. Therefore it was that he did not say '*I will manifest the Father to you*,' but rather, '*I will manifest myself to you*,' as if he should say, '*According as my Father manifests himself to me, will I manifest myself to you, for in this manifestation of himself he manifests me.*' Now therefore thou understandest why he did not say, '*I will manifest the Father to you.*' Both because such a vision is impossible for you, while yet in the mortal body, and because he is one thing with me."

CHAPTER LXIII

How the soul, after having mounted the first step of the Bridge, should proceed to mount the second.

"THOU hast now seen how excellent is the state of him who has attained to the love of a friend; climbing with the foot of affection, he has reached the secret of the Heart, which is the second of the three steps figured in the body of my Son. I have told thee what was meant by the three powers of the soul, and now I will show thee how they signify the three states through which the soul passes. Before treating of the third state, I wish to show thee how a man becomes a friend and how, from a friend, he grows into a son, attaining to filial love, and how a man may know if he has become a friend. And first of how a man arrives at being a friend. In the beginning, a man serves me imperfectly through servile fear, but by exercise and perseverance he arrives at the love of delight, finding his own delight and profit in me. This is a necessary stage by which he must pass who would attain to perfect love, to the love that is of friend and son. I call filial love perfect, because thereby a man receives his inheritance from me, the Eternal Father, and because a son's love includes that of a friend, which is why I told thee that a friend grows into a son. What means does he take to arrive thereat? I will tell thee. Every perfection and every virtue proceeds from charity, and charity is

nourished by humility, which results from the knowledge and holy hatred of self, that is, sensuality. To arrive thereat, a man must persevere, and remain in the cellar of self-knowledge in which he will learn my mercy, in the blood of my only-begotten Son, drawing to himself, with this love, my divine charity, exercising himself in the extirpation of his perverse self-will, both spiritual and temporal, hiding himself in his own house, as did Peter, who, after the sin of denying my Son, began to weep. Yet his lamentations were imperfect, and remained so until after the forty days, that is until after the Ascension. But when my Truth returned to me, in his humanity, Peter and the others concealed themselves in the house, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, which my Truth had promised them. They remained barred in from fear, because the soul always fears until she arrives at true love. But when they had persevered in fasting and in humble and continual prayer, until they had received the abundance of the Holy Spirit, they lost their fear, and followed and preached Christ crucified. So also the soul, who wishes to arrive at this perfection, after she has risen from the guilt of mortal sin, recognising it for what it is, begins to weep from fear of the penalty, whence she rises to the consideration of my mercy, in which contemplation she finds her own pleasure and profit. This is an imperfect state, and I, in order to develop perfection in the soul, after the forty days, that is after these two states, withdraw myself from time to time, not in grace but in feeling. My Truth showed you this when he said to the disciples '*I will go and will return to you.*'

"Everything that he said was said primarily and in particular to the disciples, but referred in general to the whole present and future, to those, that is to say, who should come after. He said '*I will go and will return to you;*' and so it was, for when the Holy Spirit returned upon the disciples, he also returned, as I told you above, for the Holy Spirit did not return alone, but came with my power, and the wisdom of the Son, who is one thing with me, and with his own clemency, which proceeds from me

the Father, and from the Son. Now as I told thee, in order to raise the soul from imperfection, I withdraw myself from her sentiment, depriving her of former consolations. When she was in the guilt of mortal sin, she had separated herself from me, and I deprived her of grace through her own guilt, because that guilt had barred the door of her desires. Wherefore the sun of grace did not shine, not through its own defect, but through the defect of the creature, who bars the door of desire. When she knows herself and her darkness, she opens the window and vomits her filth, by holy confession. Then I, having returned to the soul by grace, withdraw myself from her by sentiment, which I do in order to humiliate her, and cause her to seek me in truth, and to prove her in the light of faith, so that she come to prudence. Then, if she love me without thought of self, and with lively faith and with hatred of her own sensuality, she rejoices in the time of trouble, deeming herself unworthy of peace and quietness of mind. Now comes the second of the three things of which I told thee, that is to say: how the soul arrives at perfection, and what she does when she is perfect. This is what she does. Though she perceives that I have withdrawn myself, she does not, on that account, look back, but perseveres with humility in her exercises, remaining barred in the house of self-knowledge, and continuing to dwell therein, awaits, with lively faith, the coming of the Holy Spirit, that is of me, who am the fire of charity. How does she await me? Not in idleness, but in watching and continued prayer, and not only with physical, but also with intellectual watching, that is, with the eye of her mind alert, and watching with the light of faith, she extirpates with hatred the wandering thoughts of her heart, looking for the affection of my charity, and knowing that I desire nothing but her sanctification, which is certified to her in the blood of my Son. As long as her eye thus watches, illumined by the knowledge of me and of herself, she continues to pray with the prayer of holy desire, which is a continued prayer, and also with actual prayer, which she practises at the appointed times, accord-

ing to the orders of holy Church. This is what the soul does in order to rise from imperfection and arrive at perfection, and it is to this end, namely that she may arrive at perfection, that I withdraw from her, not by grace but by sentiment. Once more do I leave her, so that she may see and know her defects, so that, feeling herself deprived of consolation and afflicted by pain, she may recognise her own weakness, and learn how incapable she is of stability or perseverance, thus cutting down to the very root of spiritual self-love, for this should be the end and purpose of all her self-knowledge, to rise above herself, mounting the throne of conscience, and not permitting the sentiment of imperfect love to turn again in its death-struggle, but with correction and reproof, digging up the root of self-love with the knife of self-hatred and the love of virtue."

CHAPTER LXIV

How an imperfect lover of GOD loves his neighbour also imperfectly, and of the signs of this imperfect love.

"AND I would have thee know that just as every imperfection and perfection is acquired from me, so is it manifested by means of the neighbour. And simple souls, who often love creatures with spiritual love, know this well, for if they have received my love sincerely without any self-regarding considerations, they satisfy the thirst of their love for their neighbour equally sincerely. If a man carry away the vessel which he has filled at the fountain and then drink of it, the vessel becomes empty, but if he keep his vessel standing in the fountain while he drinks, it always remains full. So the love of the neighbour, whether spiritual or temporal, should be drunk in me, without any self-regarding considerations. I require that you should love me with the same love with which I love you. This indeed you cannot do, because I loved you without being loved. All the love which you have for me

you owe to me, so that it is not of grace that you love me, but because you ought to do so. While I love you of grace, and not because I owe you my love. Therefore to me, in person, you cannot repay the love which I require of you, and I have placed you in the midst of your fellows, that you may do to them that which you cannot do to me, that is to say, that you may love your neighbour of free grace, without expecting any return from him, and what you do to him I count as done to me, which my Truth showed forth when he said to Paul, my persecutor,—'*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*' This he said, judging that Paul persecuted him in his faithful. This love must be sincere, because it is with the same love with which you love me, that you must love your neighbour. Dost thou know how the imperfection of spiritual love for the creature is shown? It is shown when the lover feels pain if it appear to him that the object of his love does not satisfy or return his love, or when he sees the beloved one's conversation turned aside from him, or himself deprived of consolation, or another loved more than he. In these and in many other ways can it be seen that his neighbourly love is still imperfect, and that though his love was originally drawn from me, the Fountain of all love, he took the vessel out of the water, in order to drink from it. It is because his love for me is still imperfect that his neighbourly love is so weak, and because the root of self-love has not been properly dug out. Wherefore I often permit such a love to exist, so that the soul may in this way come to the knowledge of her own imperfection, and for the same reason do I withdraw myself from the soul by sentiment, that she may be thus led to enclose herself in the house of self-knowledge, where is acquired every perfection. After which I return into her with more light and with more knowledge of my Truth, in proportion to the degree in which she refers to grace the power of slaying her own will. And she never ceases to cultivate the vine of her soul, and to root out the thorns of evil thoughts, replacing them with the stones of virtues, cemented together in the blood of Christ crucified, which she has found on her

journey across the Bridge of Christ, my only-begotten Son. For I told thee, if thou remember, that upon the Bridge, that is, upon the doctrine of my Truth, were built up the stones, based upon the virtue of his blood, for it is in virtue of this blood that the virtues give life."

A TREATISE OF PRAYER

CHAPTER LXV

Of the means which the soul takes to arrive at pure and generous love; and here begins the Treatise of Prayer.

"WHEN the soul has passed through the doctrine of Christ crucified, with true love of virtue and hatred of vice, and has arrived at the house of self-knowledge and entered therein, she remains, with her door barred, in watching and constant prayer, separated entirely from the consolations of the world. Why does she thus shut herself in? She does so from fear, knowing her own imperfections, and also from the desire which she has of arriving at pure and generous love. And because she sees and knows well that in no other way can she arrive thereat, she waits with a lively faith for my arrival, through increase of grace in her. How is a lively faith to be recognised? By perseverance in virtue, and by the fact that the soul never turns back for anything, whatever it be, nor rises from holy prayer for any reason except (note well) for obedience or charity's sake. For no other reason ought she to leave off prayer, for during the time ordained for prayer, the devil is wont to arrive in the soul, causing much more conflict and trouble than when the soul is not occupied in prayer. This he does in order that holy prayer may become tedious to the soul, tempting her often with these words:—'*This prayer avails thee nothing, for thou needest attend to nothing except thy vocal prayers.*' He acts thus in order that, becoming wearied and confused in mind, she may abandon the exercise of prayer, which is a weapon with which the soul can defend herself from every adversary, if grasped with the hand of love, by the arm of free choice in the light of the Holy Faith."

CHAPTER LXVI

Here, touching something concerning the Sacrament of the Body of Christ, the complete doctrine is given; and how the soul proceeds from vocal to mental prayer, and a vision is related which this devout soul once received.

"KNOW, dearest daughter, how, by humble, continual and faithful prayer, the soul acquires, with time and perseverance, every virtue. Wherefore should she persevere and never abandon prayer, either through the illusion of the devil or her own fragility, that is to say, either on account of any thought or movement coming from her own body, or of the words of any creature. The devil often places himself upon the tongues of creatures, causing them to chatter nonsensically, with the purpose of preventing the prayer of the soul. All of this she should pass by, by means of the virtue of perseverance. Oh, how sweet and pleasant to that soul and to me is holy prayer, made in the house of knowledge of self and of me, opening the eye of the intellect to the light of faith, and the affections to the abundance of my charity, which was made visible to you, through my visible only-begotten Son, who showed it to you with his blood! Which blood inebriates the soul and clothes her with the fire of divine charity, giving her the food of the Sacrament [which is placed in the tavern of the mystical body of the holy Church], that is to say, the food of the body and blood of my Son, wholly God and wholly man, administered to you by the hand of my vicar, who holds the key of the blood. This is that tavern which I mentioned to thee, standing on the Bridge, to provide food and comfort for the travellers and the pilgrims who pass by the way of the doctrine of my Truth, lest they should faint through weakness. This food strengthens little or much, according to the desire of the recipient, whether he receives sacramentally or virtually. He receives sacramentally when he actually communicates with the Blessed Sacrament. He receives virtually when he communicates, both by desire of communion, and by con-

templation of the blood of Christ crucified, communicating as it were sacramentally, with the affection of love, which is to be tasted in the blood which, as the soul sees, was shed through love. On seeing this the soul becomes inebriated, and blazes with holy desire and satisfies herself, becoming full of love for me and for her neighbour. Where can this be acquired? In the house of self-knowledge with holy prayer, where imperfections are lost, even as Peter and the disciples, while they remained in watching and prayer, lost their imperfection and acquired perfection. By what means is this acquired? By perseverance seasoned with the most holy faith.

"But do not think that the soul receives such ardour and nourishment from prayer, if she pray only vocally, as do many souls whose prayers are rather words than love. Such as these give heed to nothing except to completing psalms and saying many paternosters. And when they have once completed their appointed tale, they do not appear to think of anything further, but seem to place devout attention and love in merely vocal recitation, which the soul is not required to do, for, in doing only this, she bears but little fruit, which pleases me but little. But if thou askest me whether the soul should abandon vocal prayer, since it does not seem to all that they are called to mental prayer, I should reply '*No.*' The soul should advance by degrees, and I know well that, just as the soul is at first imperfect and afterwards perfect, so also is it with her prayer. She should nevertheless continue in vocal prayer while she is yet imperfect, so as not to fall into idleness. But she should not say her vocal prayers without joining them to mental prayer, that is to say that, while she is reciting, she should endeavour to elevate her mind in my love, with the consideration of her own defects and of the blood of my only-begotten Son, wherein she finds the breadth of my charity and the remission of her sins. And this she should do, so that self-knowledge and the consideration of her own defects should make her recognise my goodness in herself and continue her exercises with true humility. I do not wish defects to be con-

sidered in particular, but in general, so that the mind may not be contaminated by the remembrance of particular and hideous sins. But, as I said, I do not wish the soul to consider her sins, either in general or in particular, without also remembering the blood and the broadness of my mercy, for fear that otherwise she should be brought to confusion. And together with confusion would come the devil, who has caused it, under colour of contrition and displeasure of sin, and so she would arrive at eternal damnation, not only on account of her confusion, but also through the despair which would come to her, because she did not seize the arm of my mercy. This is one of the subtle devices with which the devil deludes my servants, and in order to escape from his deceit, and to be pleasing to me, you must enlarge your hearts and affections in my boundless mercy, with true humility. Thou knowest that the pride of the devil cannot resist the humble mind, nor can any confusion of spirit be greater than the broadness of my good mercy, if the soul will only truly hope therein. Wherefore it was, if thou remember rightly, that once, when the devil wished to overthrow thee by confusion, wishing to prove to thee that thy life had been deluded, and that thou hadst not followed my will, thou didst that which was thy duty, which my goodness (which is never withheld from him who will receive it) gave thee strength to do, that is, thou didst rise, humbly trusting in my mercy, and saying: '*I confess to my Creator that my life has indeed been passed in darkness, but I will hide myself in the wounds of Christ crucified, and bathe myself in his blood, and so shall my iniquities be consumed, and with desire will I rejoice in my Creator.*' Thou rememberest that then the devil fled, and, turning round to the opposite side, he endeavoured to inflate thee with pride, saying: '*Thou art perfect and pleasing to God, and there is no more need for thee to afflict thyself or to lament thy sins.*' And once more I gave thee the light to see thy true path, namely, humiliation of thyself, and thou didst answer the devil with these words: '*Wretch that I am, John the Baptist never sinned and was sanctified in his mother's*

womb. And I have committed so many sins, and have hardly begun to know them with grief and true contrition, seeing who God is, who is offended by me, and who I am, who offend him.' Then, the devil, not being able to resist thy humble hope in my goodness, said to thee: '*Cursed that thou art, for I can find no way to take thee. If I put thee down through confusion, thou risest to Heaven on the wings of mercy, and if I raise thee on high, thou humblest thyself down to hell, and when I go into hell thou persecutest me, so that I will return to thee no more, because thou strikest me with the stick of charity.*' The soul, therefore, should season the knowledge of herself with the knowledge of my goodness, and then vocal prayer will be of use to the soul who makes it, and pleasing to me, and she will arrive, from the vocal imperfect prayer, exercised with perseverance, at perfect mental prayer; but if she simply aims at completing her tale, and for vocal abandons mental prayer, she will never arrive at it. Sometimes the soul will be so ignorant that, having resolved to say so many prayers vocally, and I, visiting her mind sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, in a flash of self-knowledge or of contrition for sin, sometimes in the broadness of my charity, and sometimes by placing before her mind, in diverse ways, according to my pleasure and the desire of the soul, the presence of my Truth, she (the soul), in order to complete her tale, will abandon my visitation, that she feels, as it were, by conscience, rather than abandon that which she had begun. She should not do so, for in so doing she yields to a deception of the devil. The moment she feels her mind disposed by my visitation in the many ways I have told thee, she should abandon vocal prayer; then, my visitation past, if there be time, she can resume the vocal prayers which she had resolved to say, but if she has not time to complete them, she ought not on that account to be troubled or suffer annoyance and confusion of mind; of course provided that it were not the divine office which clerics and religious are bound and obliged to say under penalty of offending me, for they must, until death, say their office. But if they

at the hour appointed for saying it should feel their minds drawn and raised by desire, they should so arrange as to say it before or after my visitation, so that the debt of rendering the office be not omitted. But in any other case, vocal prayer should be immediately abandoned for the said cause. Vocal prayer, made in the way that I have told thee, will enable the soul to arrive at perfection, and therefore she should not abandon it, but use it in the way that I have told thee.

And so, with exercise in perseverance, she will taste prayer in truth, and the food of the blood of my only-begotten Son, and therefore I told thee that some communicated virtually with the body and blood of Christ, although not sacramentally; that is, they communicate in the affection of charity, which they taste by means of holy prayer, little or much, according to the affection with which they pray. They who proceed with little prudence and without method, taste little, and they who proceed with much, taste much. For the more the soul tries to loosen her affection from herself, and fasten it in me with the light of the intellect, the more she knows; and the more she knows, the more she loves, and, loving much, she tastes much. Thou seest, then, that perfect prayer is not attained to through many words, but through affection of desire, the soul raising herself to me, with knowledge of herself and of my mercy, seasoned the one with the other. Thus she will exercise together mental and vocal prayer, for even as the active and contemplative life is one, so are they. Although vocal or mental prayer can be understood in many and diverse ways, for I have told thee that a holy desire is a continual prayer, in this sense that a good and holy will disposes itself with desire to the occasion actually appointed for prayer in addition to the continual prayer of holy desire, wherefore vocal prayer will be made at the appointed time by the soul who remains firm in a habitual holy will, and will sometimes be continued beyond the appointed time, according as charity commands for the salvation of the neighbour, if the soul see him to be in need, and also her own necessities according to the state in

which I have placed her. Each one, according to his condition, ought to exert himself for the salvation of souls, for this exercise lies at the root of a holy will, and whatever he may contribute, by words or deeds, towards the salvation of his neighbour, is virtually a prayer, although it does not replace a prayer which one should make oneself at the appointed season, as my glorious standard-bearer Paul said, in the words, '*He who ceases not to work ceases not to pray.*' It was for this reason that I told thee that prayer was made in many ways, that is, that actual prayer may be united with mental prayer if made with the affection of charity, which charity is itself continual prayer. I have now told thee how mental prayer is reached by exercise and perseverance, and by leaving vocal prayer for mental when I visit the soul. I have also spoken to thee of common prayer, that is, of vocal prayer in general, made outside of ordained times, and of the prayers of good-will, and how every exercise, whether performed in oneself or in one's neighbour, with good-will, is prayer. The enclosed soul should therefore spur herself on with prayer, and when she has arrived at friendly and filial love she does so. Unless the soul keep to this path, she will always remain tepid and imperfect, and will only love me and her neighbour in proportion to the pleasure which she finds in my service."

CHAPTER LXVII

Of the mistake which worldly men make who desire to serve God for their own consolation and delight.

"I WISH to tell thee somewhat of imperfect love, and not conceal from thee one snare, which those who love me for their own consolation alone may fall into. I would have thee know that my servant, who loves me imperfectly, seeks rather the consolation, on account of which he loves me, than myself, and it is to be observed that, when he fails to obtain either spiritual or temporal consolation, he

is troubled. This often shows itself in regard to temporal consolation in men of the world, who practise every act of virtue as long as they live prosperously. But when tribulation comes upon them, which I send them for their good, they are disturbed, and do no longer that little good which they once did; and if one should ask them, 'Why are you disturbed?' they reply, 'Because we have received tribulation, and that little good which we did seems to be almost lost, because we no longer do it with that heart and courage which we used to possess, on account of the tribulations which we have received, for it seems to us that we exerted ourselves more when our hearts were at rest than we do now.' Such as these are deceived by their own delight, for it is not true that tribulation causes them to love and work less. The works which they do in the time of tribulation are worth as much in themselves as those which they did before in the time of consolation; they might indeed be worth more if the murmurers had patience. But this comes to them because they delighted in their own prosperity, while they loved me with but slight virtue, in order to pacify their conscience. Being deprived of that on which they really rested, it seems to them that the repose in which they exerted themselves is taken away from them, but it is not so, for it happens to them as to a man in a garden who, because he takes pleasure in the garden, finds peace of mind and repose in working in it; that is to say, that it seems to him that he finds repose in his labours, but he is really all the time reposing in the delight caused him by the garden. He takes more delight in the garden than in his labours, because when the garden is taken away from him he feels himself deprived of the pleasure, for had his principal pleasure been placed in his labours he would not have lost it, but would have it still with him. For the exercise of working well cannot be lost unless a man be willing to lose it. From such as these the delight of prosperity, the garden, as it were, in which they worked, has been taken away, so that they have deceived themselves. Therefore they deceive themselves in working for their own pleasure,

and acquire the habit of saying, 'I know that I did better and had more consolation before I was troubled than now, and I rejoiced in doing good, but now I take no delight therein.' Their sight and their speech is false, because, if they had had delight in doing good for love of virtue, they would not have lost it, neither would it have failed, but rather increased. But it fails because their good works were founded upon love of their own consolation. In this way are people in general deceived in all their good works, that is, through love of their own consolation and of the delight which they find in me."

CHAPTER LXVIII

How the servants of God are deceived who go on loving God in the aforesaid way.

"But my servants who are still in the imperfect love seek and love me because of the affection they have towards the consolation and delight they find in me, and because I am the rewarder of every good which is done, great or small, according to the measure of the love of him who receives the reward. For this reason I give mental consolation during the time of prayer, sometimes in one way and sometimes in another. I do not this in order that the soul ignorantly receive the consolation, that is, that she regard more the consolation than me who give it, but in order that she may regard the affection of my charity with which I give it, and the unworthiness with which she receives it, more than the delight of her own consolation. But if, ignorantly, she takes hold of the delight alone, without regarding my affection, she will receive damage from it and fall into snares of which I will tell thee; one being that, deceived by her own consolation, she seeks this consolation and therein delights herself, and moreover, having at some former time experienced the consolation of my visitation in one way or another, she will endeavour to go back by the way which she has come, in order again to

experience the same consolation. But I do not grant the consolation of my visitations in one way alone, which would appear as if I had but one way in which to do so, but I grant it in diverse ways, according as pleases my goodness, and according to the need and the necessity of the soul. But the soul, in her ignorance, will, nevertheless, seek my consolations in that way alone which she has experienced, thereby, as it were, imposing laws on the Holy Spirit. She should not do so, but should pass on manfully by the doctrine of Christ crucified, receiving what it pleases my goodness to give her, and in the manner, time and place that I choose. And if, nevertheless, I give not, it is through love and not through hatred, and that she may seek and love me in truth, and not for her own delight, receiving my charity with humility. If she still goes on delighting in her own way and not in mine, when the object upon which she has fixed the eye of her intellect and in which alone she delights is taken from her, she will experience pain and intolerable confusion.

"Such as these, of whom I have spoken, desire to choose their own consolations in their own way, and so to go through life, and their ignorance is at times so great that, having imagined a particular consolation, and I visiting them in any way except that of imagination, they will resist me and will not receive me. A soul who would act thus is deceived by her own pleasure and spiritual delight, for it would be impossible to remain always in one state. She must either go forward to the virtues or turn right backwards. And neither could the mind remain stationary in the enjoyment of one delight alone without my goodness increasing that delight. Many are the kinds of delights that I give to the soul—sometimes the delight of a mental joyousness, sometimes of contrition and displeasure of self, and at times I may be in the soul and she will not feel me; or I may form my will, that is, my Incarnate Word, before the eye of the intellect, and it will not seem to her that she experiences that heat and delight in the sentiment of her soul at such vision. At other times she will feel without any mental vision the greatest delight.

These various methods I use through love to preserve her and to increase in her humility and perseverance, and to show her that she need place no rules for me, nor seek her end in consolation, but only in virtue founded in me, and to teach her with humility to receive what I choose to give her in my own time and manner, and to believe, with lively faith, that I give her what I give, either for her own salvation or to bring her to great perfection.

"She should then remain humble, making her beginning and end to be in my charity, and taking delight in this charity alone, according to my will and not according to hers. The only way not to be deceived is to receive everything through love of me, being rooted and grounded in my sweet will."

CHAPTER LXIX

Of those who, in order not to lose their own peace of mind and consolations, do not succour their neighbour in his necessities.

"I HAVE told thee how they are deceived who desire to taste and receive me mentally in their own way, and now I wish to tell thee of the second mistake they make, who have placed all their delight in the receiving of mental consolation. They will ofttimes see their neighbour in necessity, spiritual or temporal, and they will not succour him, under pretence of virtue, saying, '*If I do so I shall lose my peace and quiet of mind, or I shall not be able to say my Hours at the right time.*' For they think that if they receive no consolation, I am thereby offended, but they are deceived by their own mental and spiritual delight, for they offend me more by not relieving their neighbour's necessity than if they had abandoned all those things whereby they receive consolation; for all vocal and mental exercise is ordained by me to bring the soul to perfect love of me and of the neighbour, and to preserve her in this love. Therefore, in failing in love to his neighbour, a man offends me more than if he had abandoned his ordinary exercise and lost his peace of mind; and more-

over, he would truly find me in exercising love towards his neighbour, whereas, in seeking delight in his own consolation, he is deprived of me, for by not succouring his neighbour immediately, his love for him diminishes, and his love for his neighbour diminishing, my affection towards him also diminishes, and thus is his consolation diminished too. So that, thinking to gain, he loses, and where he would think to lose, he gains. That is, being willing to lose his own consolation for his neighbour's salvation, he receives and gains me, and the neighbour too, succouring him and serving him charitably, and tasting each time he does so the sweetness of my love. But, not doing so, he suffers pain, for it sometimes happens that he will be obliged, either through love or force of circumstances, to help his neighbour either for some spiritual or corporal infirmity, and, doing it in this way, he does it with mental tedium, being pricked by conscience, and becomes insupportable to himself and to others. And should any one ask him: '*Why dost thou feel this pain?*' He would reply: '*I seem to have lost all peace and quiet of mind, and many things that I used to do I have left off, and I think that thereby I have offended God.*' But he is mistaken. He has placed the vision of the eye of his intellect on his own delight alone, and therefore he discerns not, nor knows where his offence truly lies. Because, could he discern, he would see that his offence does not consist in not having his customary mental consolation, or in having abandoned the exercise of prayer in the time of his neighbour's need, but in having been found without true love for his neighbour, whom he should love and serve through love of me.

"So that thou seest how spiritual self-love alone is capable of deceiving the soul."

CHAPTER LXX

Of the deception which those fall into, who have placed all their affections in consolations and mental visions.

"SOMETIMES, through such love as this, the soul receives even more damage than if her affection is altogether placed in consolations and visions which I often give to my servants, for when she feels herself deprived of them, she falls into bitterness and tedium of mind, for it seems to her that she is deprived of grace, though I have only withdrawn myself from her mind by sentiment, and not by grace, as I have told thee that I often do, in order to bring the soul to perfection. So she falls into bitterness, and seems to herself to have entered into hell, feeling no delight, but the molestation of many temptations. She should not be so ignorant, nor allow herself to be so deceived by spiritual self-love; but she does not know me truly in herself, who am her Supreme Good, preserving to her my goodwill in the time of battle, though she does not hasten to the warfare with delight. She should rather humiliate herself, deeming herself unworthy of peace and quiet of mind. For this purpose do I withdraw from her, so that she may humiliate herself and learn my charity in her, seeing the goodwill which I preserve to her in the time of battle, and also that she may not only receive the milk of sweetness sprinkled by me on the face of her soul, but that, clinging to the breast of my Truth, she may receive milk together with meat, that is, may draw to herself the milk of my charity, by means of the flesh of Christ crucified; which is the doctrine of which I have made for you a Bridge, by crossing which you arrive at me, who have withdrawn myself from you for this purpose. Wherefore, to souls who act with prudence, not ignorantly receiving the milk alone, I return with more delight and strength, with more light and ardour of charity. But if, on the other hand, they endure with tedium and sadness and confusion of mind the suffering caused them by the loss of mental sweetness, they gain but little, and remain in their tepidity."

CHAPTER LXXI

How it is possible for the aforesaid souls, who take delight in consolations and mental visions, to be deceived by the devil in a form of light; and how to know when a vision is from GOD, and when from the devil.

"ANOTHER delusion that the devil often practises upon such souls is, that he transforms himself into a form of light. For seeing the soul to be disposed to desire and receive such a form, her mind being absorbed, and her desires placed in consolations and mental visions alone (which should not be so, for the soul should place her desires in virtue alone, deeming herself unworthy of consolation), he transforms himself into a form of light in diverse ways, sometimes as an angel, and sometimes as my truth, or as one of my saints, doing so in order to catch that soul with the hook of her own spiritual delight, which consists in visions and mental pleasure. And if this soul does not rise above herself with true humility, despising every delight, she will remain, caught by the hook, in the hands of the devil; but if she, with humility, disdaining the bait of delight, will bind her affections fast to me, who am the giver, and not to the gift, she will be released, for the devil, on account of his pride, cannot bear a humble mind.

"If thou askest me how it is to be known whether a visitation is from me or from the devil, I reply to thee that this is the sign. If it is the devil who has come into thy mind in a form of light, as has been said, to visit it, thou wilt suddenly feel in his coming great joyousness, but as he stays thou wilt gradually lose joyousness, and thy mind will be left in tedium or excitement, darkening thee within. But if the soul is in truth visited by me, eternal Truth, she will, in the first sensation, experience holy fear, and with this fear joy and security, with a sweet prudence, that in doubting does not doubt, the soul deeming herself unworthy, saying, '*I am not worthy to receive thy visitation, and, not being worthy, how can such a thing be?*' But she will then turn to the broadness of my charity,

knowing and seeing that it is possible for me to give, and that I do not regard her unworthiness, but rather my worthiness, which makes her worthy to receive me, through grace, in sentiment; and she will see that I do not despise her desire when she calls to me, and she will humbly receive me, saying, '*Behold thine handmaid. Thy will be done in me.*' And she will arise from her prayer and my visitation with joyousness, and will humbly rejoice in mind, deeming herself unworthy, but recognising with love her joyousness as coming from me.

"This, then, that I have told thee, is the sign by which the soul may know whether her visitation is of me or of the devil. If it be of me, her first sensation will be one of holy fear, her second joyousness, and at the end she will feel joy and hunger for the virtues. And if it be of the devil, the first sensation is joyousness, but the mind is left in confusion and darkness.

"I have thus shown thee a means by which the soul, if she will go humbly and with prudence, cannot be deceived, which she will be if she tries to navigate herself by means of her own imperfect love of consolations, rather than by love of me, as I have told thee."

CHAPTER LXXII

How the soul who truly knows herself, wisely guards against all the aforesaid deceptions.

"I HAVE not wanted to conceal from thee the deception that common folk receive through sensitive love, through the small good which they practise, that is to say, through that little virtue which they exercise in times of spiritual consolation, or the spiritual self-love which my servants have in their own consolations, and how they deceive themselves with the self-love of delight, which does not let them know the truth of my affection, nor discern their own guilt, and the deception which the devil practises on them, through their own fault, if they keep not the way which I

have told thee. And all these things I have told thee, so that thou and my servants may walk in virtue, through love of me, and nothing else. But they who love me with imperfect love, that is, who love me for my gifts and not for myself, who am the Giver, fall into all these perils and deceptions. But the soul who has in truth entered the house of self-knowledge, and by the exercise of perfect prayer has raised herself from the imperfect love of imperfect prayer, by the means of which I speak to thee in this treatise on prayer, receives me, through affection of love, seeking to draw to herself the milk of my sweetness from the breast of the doctrine of Christ crucified. And when these souls have attained to the third state, that is, to friendly and filial love, they have no longer any mercenary love, but they act as do very dear friends. For as the eye of one, on being given a present by his friend, does not turn to the gift alone but also to the heart of the giver, receiving and keeping the present for the sake of the affection which gave it, so the soul, who has attained to the third state of perfect love, when she receives my gifts and graces, looks not only at the gifts, but with the eye of her intellect looks at the affection of charity of me, the Giver. And in order that she may have no excuse for not doing so, in my providence I have united the gift with the Giver, that is, the divine nature with the human nature, when I gave you the word of my only-begotten Son, who is one thing with me and I with him. So that, by this union, you cannot look at the gift without looking at me, the Giver. Thou seest then with how great affection thou shouldest love and desire both gift and Giver. Doing thus your love will be pure and not mercenary, as is the love of those who remain barred up in the house of self-knowledge."

CHAPTER LXXIII

Of the method by which the soul separates herself from imperfect love, and attains to perfect love, friendly and filial.

"HITHERTO I have shown thee in many ways how the soul raises herself from imperfection and attains to perfection, which she does after she has attained to friendly and filial love. I tell thee that she arrives at perfect love by means of perseverance, barring herself into the house of self-knowledge, which knowledge of self requires to be seasoned with knowledge of me, lest it bring the soul to confusion, for it would cause the soul to hate her own sensitive pleasure and the delight of her own consolations. But from this hatred, founded in humility, she will draw patience, with which she will become strong against the attacks of the devil, against the persecutions of man, and towards me, when, for her good, I withdraw delight from her mind. And if her sensuality, through malevolence, should lift its head against reason, the judgement of conscience should rise against it, and, with hatred of it, hold out reason against it, not allowing such evil emotions to get by it. Though sometimes the soul who lives in holy hatred corrects and reproves herself, not only for those things that are against reason, but also for things that in reality come from me, which is what my sweet servant St Gregory meant, when he said that a holy and pure conscience made sin where there was no sin, that is, that through purity of conscience it saw sin where there was no sin.

"Now the soul who wishes to rise above imperfection should await my providence in the house of self-knowledge, with the light of faith, as did the disciples, who remained in the house in perseverance and in watching, and in humble and continual prayer, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. She should remain fasting and watching, the eye of her intellect fastened on the doctrine of my Truth, and she will become humble because she will know herself in humble and continual prayer and holy and true desire."

CHAPTER LXXIV

Of the signs by which the soul knows she has arrived at perfect love.

"It now remains to be told thee how it can be seen that souls have arrived at perfect love. This is seen by the same sign that was given to the holy disciples after they had received the Holy Spirit, when they came forth from the house, and fearlessly announced the doctrine of my Word, my only-begotten Son, not fearing pain, but rather glorying therein. They did not mind going before the tyrants of the world to announce to them the truth, for the glory and praise of my name. So the soul, who has awaited me in self-knowledge as I have told thee, receives me, on my return to her, with the fire of charity, in which charity, while still remaining in the house with perseverance, she conceives the virtues by affection of love, participating in my power; with which power and virtues she overrules and conquers her own sensitive passions, and through which charity she participates in the wisdom of my Son, in which she sees and knows, with the eye of her intellect, my Truth and the deceptions of spiritual self-love, that is, the imperfect love of her own consolations, as has been said, and she knows also the malice and deceit of the devil, which he practises on those souls who are bound by that imperfect love. She therefore arises, with hatred of that imperfection and with love of perfection, and through this charity, which is of the Holy Spirit, she participates in his will, fortifying her own to be willing to suffer pain, and coming out of the house through my name, she brings forth the virtues on her neighbour. Not that by coming out to bring forth the virtues, I mean that she issues out of the house of self-knowledge, but that in the time of the neighbour's necessity she loses that fear of being deprived of her own consolations, and so issues forth to give birth to those virtues which she has conceived through affection of love. The souls who have thus come forth have reached the fourth state, that is, from the third

state, which is a perfect state, in which they taste charity and give birth to it on their neighbours, they have arrived at the fourth state, which is one of perfect union with me. The two last-mentioned states are united, that is to say, one cannot be without the other, for there cannot be love of me without love of the neighbour, nor love of the neighbour without love of me."

CHAPTER LXXV

How they who are imperfect desire to follow the Father alone, but they who are perfect desire to follow the Son. And of a vision which this holy soul had, concerning diverse baptisms, and of many other beautiful and useful things.

"As I have told thee, these latter have issued forth from the house, which is a sign that they have arisen from imperfection and arrived at perfection. Open the eye of thy intellect and see them running by the Bridge of the doctrine of Christ crucified, which was their rule, way and doctrine. They place none other before the eye of their intellect than Christ crucified, not the Father, as they do who are in imperfect love and do not wish to suffer pain, but only to have the delight which they find in me. But they, as if drunken with love and burning with it, have gathered together and ascended the three steps, which I figured to thee as the three powers of the soul, and also the three actual steps, figured to thee as in the body of my only Son, Christ crucified, by which steps the soul, as I told thee, ascended, first climbing to the feet, with the feet of the soul's affection, from thence arriving at the side, where she found the secret of the heart and knew the baptism of water, which has virtue through the blood, and where I dispose the soul to receive grace, uniting and kneading her together in the blood. Where did the soul know of this her dignity, in being kneaded and united with the blood of the Lamb, receiving the grace in holy baptism, in virtue of the blood? In the side, where she knew the fire of divine charity, and so, if thou remember

well, my Truth manifested to thee, when thou askedst, saying: '*Sweet and immaculate Lamb, thou wert dead when thy side was opened. Why then didst thou want to be struck and have thy heart divided?*' And he replied to thee, telling thee that there was occasion enough for it; but the principal part of what he said I will tell thee. He said: Because my desire towards the human generation was ended, and I had finished the actual work of bearing pain and torment, and yet I had not been able to show, by finite things, because my love was infinite, how much more love I had, I wished thee to see the secret of the heart, showing it to thee open, so that thou mightest see how much more I loved than I could show thee by finite pain. I poured from it blood and water, to show thee the baptism of water, which is received in virtue of the blood. I also showed the baptism of love in two ways, first in those who are baptised in their blood, shed for me, which has virtue through my blood, even if they have not been able to have holy baptism, and also in those who are baptised in fire, not being able to have holy baptism, but desiring it with the affection of love. There is no baptism of fire without the blood, because the blood is steeped in and kneaded with the fire of divine charity, because through love was it shed. There is yet another way by which the soul receives the baptism of blood, speaking, as it were, under a figure, and this way the divine charity provided, knowing the infirmity and fragility of man, through which he offends, not that he is obliged, through his fragility and infirmity, to commit sin unless he wish to do so; but falling, as he will, into the guilt of mortal sin, by which he loses the grace which he drew from holy baptism in virtue of the blood, it was necessary to leave a continual baptism of blood. This the divine charity provided in the sacrament of holy confession, the soul receiving the baptism of blood, with contrition of heart, confessing, when able, to my ministers, who hold the keys of the blood, sprinkling it, in absolution, upon the face of the soul. But if the soul be unable to confess, contrition of heart is sufficient for this baptism, the hand of my clemency giving you the fruit of

this precious blood. But if you are able to confess, I wish you to do so, and if you are able to, and do not, you will be deprived of the fruit of the blood. It is true that, in the last extremity, a man desiring to confess and not being able to will receive the fruit of this baptism, of which I have been speaking. But let no one be so mad as so to arrange his deeds that, in the hope of receiving it, he puts off confessing until the last extremity of death, when he may not be able to do so. In which case, it is not at all certain that I shall not say to him, in my divine justice: '*Thou didst not remember me in the time of thy life, when thou couldest; now will I not remember thee in thy death.*'

"Thou seest then that these baptisms, which you should all receive until the last moment, are continual, and though my works, that is, the pains of the cross, were finite, the fruits of them which you receive in baptism, through me, are infinite. This is in virtue of the infinite divine nature, united with the finite human nature, which human nature endures pain in me, the Word, clothed with your humanity. But because the one nature is steeped in and united with the other, the eternal Deity drew to himself the pain which I suffered with so much fire and love. And therefore can this operation be called infinite, not that my pain, neither the actuality of the body be infinite, nor the pain of the desire that I had to complete your redemption, because it was terminated and finished on the cross, when the soul was separated from the body; but the fruit which came out of the pain and desire for your salvation is infinite, and therefore you receive it infinitely. Had it not been infinite, the whole human generation could not have been restored to grace, neither the past, the present, nor the future. This I manifested in the opening of my side, where is found the secret of the heart, showing that I loved more than I could show, with finite pain. I showed to thee that my love was infinite. How? By the baptism of blood, united with the fire of my charity, and by the general baptism given to Christians, and to whomsoever will receive it, and by the baptism of water, united with the blood and the fire, wherein the soul is steeped. And,

in order to show this, it was necessary for the blood to come out of my side. Now I have shown thee (said my Truth to thee) what thou askedst of me."

CHAPTER LXXVI

How the soul, having mounted the third step of the holy Bridge, that is, having arrived at the mouth, at once makes use of it—and how the death of self-will is the true sign that the soul has arrived there.

"NOW I say to thee that all this, which I have just narrated to thee, as thou knowest, in the person of my Truth, was narrated to thee so that thou mightest know the excellence of the state of that soul, who has ascended the second step, where she learns and acquires so much fire of love, and from whence she immediately runs to the third, that is, to the mouth, which proves her to have arrived at the perfect state. Through what did she pass? Through the midst of the heart, that is the blood, wherein she was re-baptised, leaving imperfect love, through the knowledge that she drew from the cordial love, seeing, tasting and proving the fire of my charity.

"Such, then, have arrived at the mouth, and they show it by taking the office of the mouth. The mouth speaks by means of the tongue, which is in the mouth, and tastes by means of the palate, giving to the stomach what the mouth retains and what has been chewed by the teeth to make it fit to be swallowed. The soul does likewise. First she speaks to me with the tongue, which is in the mouth of holy desire, that is to say, the tongue of holy and continual prayer. This tongue speaks actually and mentally, mentally offering to me sweet and amorous desires for the salvation of souls, and actually announcing the doctrine of my Truth, admonishing, counselling, confessing without fear of any pain which the world may cause her. I say that she eats, taking the food of souls, for my honour, on the table of the cross, and on no other table and in no other way could she eat perfectly and in truth. She then chews

with the teeth of hatred and love; that is, hatred of vice and love of virtue, which are the two rows of teeth in the mouth of holy desire, for otherwise she would not be able to swallow the food of souls.

She chews, I say, for the sake of the salvation of souls, insults, villainies, reproofs and persecutions, enduring hunger and thirst, cold and heat, painful desires and tears and sweat, and she chews them all for my honour, bearing and supporting her neighbour. She then tastes the relish of the fruit of toil and the delight of the food of souls, in fire of my love and that of her neighbour. The food then reaches the stomach, that is, the stomach of the heart, which by desire and the soul's hunger is disposed to receive it, with cordial love and delight and affection for the neighbour. Delighting in the food, the stomach of the heart heaps it up by the aforesaid process, and loses corporal hunger, becoming able to take the food of the table of the doctrine of Christ crucified. The soul fattens on the royal and true virtues, and swells so greatly through the abundance of her food that her clothing of sensuality, that is to say her body, which covers the soul, bursts, and the body that bursts is dead; thus is the sensitive will of the soul dead, but the spiritual will is living, clothed in my eternal will.

Now this death of the sensitive will, after the soul had eaten of the affection of my charity, is the sign by which it is known, in truth, that the soul has arrived at the third step, that is the mouth. And in the mouth she found peace and quiet, and nothing can disturb her peace and quiet, because her sensitive will is dead. They who have arrived at this step, bring forth the virtues upon their neighbour without pain, not because pain is no longer painful to them, but because, their sensitive will being dead, they voluntarily bear pain for my sake. They run without negligence, by the doctrine of Christ crucified, and slacken not their pace on account of the persecutions, injuries or pleasures of the world. They pass by all these things with fortitude and perseverance, their affection clothed in the affection of charity, and eating the food of

souls with true and perfect patience, which patience is a sign that the soul is in perfect love, loving without any consideration of self. For did she love me and her neighbour for her own profit, she would, in impatience, slacken her steps, but loving me, who am the Supreme Being and worthy to be loved, she loves herself and her neighbour through me alone, caring only for the glory and praise of my name, which causes her to be patient and strong to suffer, and persevering."

CHAPTER LXXVII

Of the works of the soul after she has ascended the aforesaid holy step.

"THE three glorious virtues which crown the soul who, with the light of the most holy faith, has attained to the summit of this charity, are patience, fortitude, and perseverance, and in the light of the most holy faith she now runs the way of the truth without darkness, and is so raised on high by holy desire that no one can offend her, neither the devil with his temptations, because he fears the soul burning in the furnace of holy charity, nor men with their injuries and detractions, for, though the world may persecute her, it fears her, and such trials as the devil or the world may cause her, I permit in my goodness, and, because she makes herself small through humility, I fortify her and make her great before the world. As thou hast seen well in my saints, who for my sake made themselves small, and I have made them great in eternal life and in the mystic body of my holy Church, where mention is always made of them, because their names are written in the book of life, and the world holds them in reverence, because they despised it. Such as they hide not their virtue through fear, but through humility, and if their neighbour needs their service, they do not hide themselves for fear of trouble or of losing their own consolation, but they serve him manfully, not caring what they lose thereby themselves. And in whatever way they use their life and

time in my honour, they rejoice, finding for themselves peace and quiet of mind. Why is it thus with them? Because they do not choose to serve me in their way, but in my way, and, for that reason, times of consolation appear to them as heavy as times of tribulation, and the time of prosperity as that of adversity. The one seems to them the same as the other, because in everything they see my will, and they think of nothing except of conforming themselves in every time and place to my will. They have seen that nothing is made without me, and that all, except sin, is made with mystery and divine providence, therefore, except sin which they hate, they hold everything in reverence. Their will is therefore firm and stable, and they go on by the way of truth, and do not slacken their pace, helping their neighbour, without regarding his ignorance and ingratitude, and caring not for the injuries and reproofs of the vicious, but rather crying before my face in prayer for them, grieving more for the injury they do me, and the damnation of their soul, than for their own annoyance. They say with glorious Paul, my standard bearer: '*The world curses us and we bless, it persecutes us and we return thanks, we are swept away as the dirt and refuse of the world and we endure patiently.*' So, most delightful daughter, thou seest the sweet signs, and above all other signs the virtue of patience, by which the soul shows herself in truth to have arisen from imperfection and attained to perfect love, following the sweet and immaculate Lamb, my only-begotten Son, who, being on the cross, held by the nails of love, did not draw back on account of the taunts of the Jews who said: '*Descend from the cross and we will believe thee,*' and neither did he draw back for your ingratitude, and not persevere in the obedience which I had imposed upon him, but he endured with so much patience that no cry of murmuring was heard from him.

"In a like way do my most delightful sons, and faithful servants, follow the doctrine and example of my Truth, and they do not turn back from following the plough, because the world would withdraw them by flattery or threats, but they fix their eyes on my Truth alone. Such

as they would not want to leave the field of battle in order to don the garment of peace and remain at home, but would rather want to flee creatures and pleasures than me, their Creator. They will stand with delight in the field of battle, drunk and inebriated with the blood of Christ crucified, which is placed in the tavern of the church of my charity, to give life to those who would be true knights, and fight against their own sensuality and fragile flesh, against the world and the devil, with the knife of hatred of vice and the knife of the love of virtue, which knife of love is a weapon that parries all sin, and which the enemy cannot take from them, unless they voluntarily take off their armour, surrendering the knife of the said love into the enemy's hand. They who are inebriated with the blood would not do thus, but they would rather manfully persevere until death, when all their enemies would be discomfited.

"O glorious virtues! how pleasing they are to me, and how, in the world, they shine in the darkened eyes of the ignorant, who cannot participate in the light of my servants! In the hatred of those who persecute my servants, shines the clemency which the persecuted ones have for the salvation of their tormentors; in their envy shines the broadness of charity, and in their cruelty, pity—for they are cruel to themselves; in injury shines Queen Patience, who is supreme over all the virtues, because she is the mirror of charity. She shows up in review the virtues of the soul, and shows whether they are founded by me in truth or not. She conquers and is never conquered. She is accompanied by perseverance and fortitude, as I have told thee, and when she comes out of the battle-field and returns with victory to the house, to me, Eternal Father, the rewarder of every toil, she receives the crown of glory."

CHAPTER LXXVIII

Of the fourth state, which is, nevertheless, not separated from the third, and of the works of the soul who has arrived at this state, and how she is never left by GOD, who remains with her in continual sentiment.

"NOW I have told thee how it is to be seen that souls have arrived at the perfection of love, friendly and filial. Now I do not want to conceal from thee how great is the delight with which they taste me, though they are still in the mortal body. This is because, having arrived at the third state, they acquire the fourth, which, however, is not separated from the third, but is united with it, and the one cannot be without the other, except in the same way as love of me can be without love of the neighbour. A fruit that arises from this third condition of the soul's perfect union with me, wherein she acquires fortitude, is that not only does she bear with patience, but she anxiously desires to suffer pain for the glory and praise of my name. Such as these glory in the shame of my only-begotten Son, as said Paul, my standard-bearer: '*I glory in tribulations, and in the shame of Christ crucified*'—and in another place—'*God forbid that I should glory save in Christ crucified*'—and again—'*I bear in my body the stigmata of Christ crucified.*' Such as these, I say, as if enamoured of my honour, and famished for the food of souls, run to the table of the most holy cross, willing to suffer pain and endure much for the service of the neighbour, and desiring to preserve and acquire the virtues, bearing in their body the stigmata of Christ crucified, causing the crucified love which is theirs to shine, being visible through self-contempt and delighted endurance of the shames and vexations on every side. To these, my most dear sons, trouble is a pleasure, and pleasure and every consolation that the world would offer them are a toil, and not only the consolation that the servants of the world, by my dispensation, are constrained to give them, in reverence and in compassion of their corporal necessities, but also the mental consolation which they receive from me, the eternal Father.

Even this they despise through humility and self-hatred. They do not despise consolation itself, which is my gift and grace, but only the pleasure which the soul's appetite finds therein. And this they do through the virtue of true humility, obtained through holy self-hatred, which is the nurse and nourisher of love, and has been acquired through true knowledge of themselves and of me. Wherefore, as thou seest, the virtues and wounds of Christ crucified shine in their bodies and souls. Such as these do not feel any separation from me, as happens in the case of others, of whom I have told thee, namely, that I would leave them, not by grace, but by feeling, afterwards returning to them again. I do not act thus to these most perfect ones who have arrived at the great perfection, and are entirely dead to their own will, but I remain continually both by grace and feeling in their souls, so that at any time that they wish they can unite their minds to me, through love. They can in no way be separated from my love, for, by love, they have arrived at so close a union. Every place is to them an oratory, every moment a time for prayer—their conversation has ascended from earth to heaven—that is to say, they have cut off from themselves every form of earthly affection and sensual self-love, and have risen alone themselves into the very height of heaven, having climbed the staircase of the virtues and mounted the three steps which I figured to thee, in the body of my Son. On the first step the feet of their affection are divested of the love of vice; on the second they taste the secret love of the heart, where they can see desire of virtue; on the third, the step of purity and peace of mind, they find in themselves the virtues, and, rising above imperfect love, they attain the great perfection. For they have found rest to their souls in the doctrine of my Truth, having found both table and food and server, which food they taste, through the doctrine of Christ crucified, my only-begotten Son. I am their bed and board, and my sweet and amorous Word is their food, for they eat the bread of souls in the person of this glorious Word, for I give him to you, that is his flesh and blood, wholly GOD and wholly man, in

the sacrament of the altar, by my goodness, while you are still pilgrims and wayfarers, so that you may not slacken your pace through faintness, or lose the memory of the benefits of the blood, shed for you with so much fire of love, and may always be able to comfort and delight yourselves while on your journey. The Holy Spirit serves these souls, for he is the affection of my charity which ministers to them both gifts and graces. This sweet servant both fetches and carries to me their painful but sweetly amorous desires, and to them the fruit of the divine love, and of their labours, so that they feed on the sweetness of my charity, so that, as thou seest, I am the table, and my Son is the food, and the Holy Spirit proceeding from me, the Father, and from him, the Son, is the server. Thou seest, then, that they always feel me in their minds, by sentiment as well as by grace; and the more they have despised trouble, taking pleasure in it and desiring it, the more completely have they passed beyond it and acquired delight, because their ardent souls are enflamed with my love, wherein their will is consumed. The devil fears the rod of their charity, and the world strikes the outside of their bodies to hurt them, but to its own injury, because the arrow, which cannot find a place to enter, returns against him who sent it. For when the world hurls the darts of injuries, persecutions and murmurings against my most perfect servants, there is no joint in their harness for them to enter by, the garden of their soul being walled up, so that the dart returns against him who hurled it, poisoning him with the venom of his own sin. Thou seest, then, that the soul can in no way be attacked through the body, but remains both blessed and sorrowful. Sorrowful for the sake of her neighbour's sin, and blessed through the union of love with me which she enjoys in herself. Such as these follow the Immaculate Lamb, my only-begotten Son, who was both blessed and sorrowful on the cross. He was sorrowful in that he bore the cross of the body, suffering pain and the cross of desire, in order to satisfy for the guilt of the human race, and he was blessed because the divine nature, though

united with the human, could suffer no pain, but always kept his soul in a state of blessedness, being revealed without a veil to her, so that he was both blessed and sorrowful, for, while the flesh endured, neither the Deity nor the superior part of the soul, which is above the intellect, could suffer.

"So these, my sons of delight, who have arrived at the third and fourth states, are sorrowful, for they carry both a physical and a mental cross—that is to say, they bear pain in their bodies according to my permission, and in their mind the cross of desire, for they are tortured by sorrow at the offence done to me, and the loss of their neighbour. Yet I say to thee that they are blessed, because the delight of charity which makes them so, cannot be taken away from them. Their grief, then, cannot be called afflicting sorrow, but rather fattening, for the soul is fattened by her love, and virtues are augmented and fortified by trouble. Their trouble fattens them and does not afflict them, because no trouble can draw them out of the fire of my love. These souls, thrown into the furnace of my charity, no part of their will remaining outside, but the whole of them being enflamed in me, are like a brand wholly consumed in the furnace, so that no one can take hold of it to extinguish it, because it has become fire. In the same way, no one can seize these souls or draw them outside of me, because they are made one thing with me through grace, and I never withdraw myself from them by sentiment, as in the case of those who I am leading on to perfection. For with souls who have arrived at perfection, I play no more the game of love, which consists in leaving and returning again to the soul, though thou must understand that it is not, properly speaking, I, the immovable GOD, who thus illude them, but rather the sentiment that my charity gives them of me."

CHAPTER LXXIX

How GOD does not withdraw himself from the aforesaid perfect ones by sentiment or by grace, but how he withdraws the union of himself from them.

"I HAVE said that, from these perfect ones, I never withdraw by sentiment. But in another way I depart from them, for the soul, being bound in the body, is not sufficient continually to receive that union which I make with her. And because she is not sufficient, I withdraw myself, not by sentiment or by grace, but by that union which I make with her. For souls, arising with anxious desire, run, with virtue, by the Bridge of the doctrine of Christ crucified, and arrive at the gate, lifting up their minds in me, and in the blood, and burning with the fire of love they taste in me, the eternal Deity, who am to them a sea pacific, with whom the soul has made so great union, that she has no movement except in me. And, being yet mortal, they taste the good of the immortals, and having yet the weight of the body, they receive the joy of the spirit. Wherefore oftentimes, through the perfect union which the soul has made with me, she is raised from the earth almost as if the heavy body became light. But this does not mean that the heaviness of the body is taken away, but that the union of the soul with me is more perfect than the union of the body with the soul; wherefore the strength of the spirit, united with me, raises the weight of the body from the earth, leaving it as if immovable and all pulled to pieces in the affection of the soul. Thou rememberest to have heard it said of some creatures, that were it not for my goodness, in seeking strength for them, they would not be able to live, and I would tell thee that, in the fact that the souls of some do not leave their bodies is to be seen a greater miracle than in the fact that some have arisen from the dead, so great is the union which they have with me. I, therefore, sometimes for a space withdraw from the union, making the soul return to the vessel of her body, that is, to the sentiment of the body, from which she was separated through the affection

of love. From the body she did not depart, because that cannot be, except in death; the bodily powers alone departed, becoming united to me through affection of love. The memory is full of nothing but me; the intellect, elevated, gazes upon the object of my Truth; the affection, which follows the intellect, loves and becomes united with that which the intellect sees. These powers, being united and gathered together and immersed and inflamed in me, the body loses its feeling, so that the seeing eye sees not, and the hearing ear hears not, and the tongue does not speak, except as the abundance of the heart will sometimes permit it for the alleviation of the heart and the praise and glory of my name.

"The hand does not touch and the feet walk not, because the members are bound with the sentiment of love, and, as it were, contrary to all their natural functions, cry to me the eternal Father for the separation of the soul from the body, as did my glorious Paul, saying, '*O wretched man that I am, who will separate me from this body? for I feel within me a perverse law which wars against the Spirit.*' Paul was not referring to the warring of senses against the Spirit, from which he knew he was secured by my words: *My grace is sufficient for thee.* Why then did he utter those words? Because he found himself bound in the vessel of the body, which for a space of time impeded his vision of me, that is to say that, until death, his eyes were bound so as not to be able to see me, the eternal Trinity, who am in the sight of the blessed immortals, who render praise and glory to my name. Whereas he found himself in the midst of mortals who always offend me, deprived of the sight of me, that is, of me in my essence. Not that he and my other servants see me not in the virtue of charity in diverse ways, according as pleases my goodness, but they see me not in essence. But every vision, which the soul, while it is in the mortal body, receives of me is a darkness compared to that sight which the soul has who is separated from the body. So that it seemed to Paul that the bodily vision warred against the vision of the Spirit, and that the feeling of the

grossness of the human body impeded the intellectual eye, not allowing him to see me face to face, and it seemed to him that his will was so bound that he could not love as he wanted to love, for every love in this life, until it reaches its perfection, is imperfect. Not that the love of Paul and of my other servants was imperfect in grace and in charity, because it was perfect, but it was imperfect in that it had not satisfaction, which gave him pain, for, had his desire been filled with that which he loved, he would have felt no pain. But the soul, who is separated from the body, has her desire filled, and has therefore no pain. She is satisfied, the tedium of satiety being far from her and the pain of hunger. Her vessel is filled, and she is firm and stable in me, the Truth, so that she can desire nothing which she has not. Desiring me, she sees me face to face, desiring to see the glory and praise of my name in my saints, she sees them in the angelic as well as in the human nature."

CHAPTER LXXX

How worldly people render glory and praise to GOD, whether they will or no.

"AND so perfect is her vision that she sees the glory and praise of my name, not so much in the angelic nature as in the human, for, whether worldly people will or no, they render glory and praise to my name, not that they do so in the way they should, loving me above everything, but that my mercy shines in them, in that, in the abundance of my charity, I give them time, and do not order the earth to open and swallow them up on account of their sins. I even wait for them, and command the earth to give them of her fruits, the sun to give them light and warmth, and the sky to move above them. And in all things created and made for them, I use my charity and mercy, withdrawing neither on account of their sins. I even give equally to the sinner and the righteous man, and often more to the sinner than to the righteous man, because the

righteous man is able to endure privation, and I take from him the goods of the world that he may the more abundantly enjoy the goods of heaven. So that in worldly men my mercy and charity shine, and they render praise and glory to my name, even when they persecute my servants; for they prove in them the virtues of patience and charity, causing them to suffer humbly and offer to me their persecutions and injuries, thus turning them into my praise and glory.

"So that, whether they will or no, worldly people render to my name praise and glory, even when they intend to do me infamy and wrong."

CHAPTER LXXXI

How even the devils render glory and praise to GOD.

"SINNERS, such as those of whom I have just spoken, are placed in this life in order to augment virtues in my servants, as the devils are in hell as my justitiars and augmentors of my glory; that is, my instruments of justice towards the damned, and the augmentors of my glory in my creatures, who are wayfarers and pilgrims on their journey to reach me, their end. They augment in them the virtues in diverse ways, exercising them with many temptations and vexations, causing them to injure one another and take one another's property, and not for the motive of making them receive injury or be deprived of their property, but only to deprive them of charity. But in thinking to deprive my servants, they fortify them, proving in them the virtues of patience, fortitude, and perseverance. Thus they render praise and glory to my name, and my Truth is fulfilled in them, which Truth created them for the praise and glory of me, Eternal Father, and that they might participate in my beauty. But, rebelling against me in their pride, they fell and lost their vision of me, wherefore they rendered not to me glory through the affection of love, and I, Eternal Truth, have

placed them as instruments to exercise my servants in virtue in this life and as justitiars to those who go, for their sins, to the pains of purgatory. So thou seest that my Truth is fulfilled in them, that is, that they render me glory, not as citizens of life eternal, of which they are deprived by their sins, but as my justitiars, manifesting justice upon the damned, and upon those in purgatory."

CHAPTER LXXXII

How the soul, after she has passed through this life, sees fully the praise and glory of my name in everything, and, though in her the pain of desire is ended, the desire is not.

"THUS in all things created, in all rational creatures, and in the devils is seen the glory and praise of my name. Who can see it? The soul who is denuded of the body and has reached me, her end, sees it clearly, and, in seeing, knows the truth. Seeing me, the Eternal Father, she loves, and loving she is satisfied. Satisfied, she knows the Truth, and her will is stayed in my will, bound and made stable, so that in nothing can it suffer pain, because it has that which it desired to have, before the soul saw me, namely, the glory and praise of my name. She now, in truth, sees it completely in my saints, in the blessed spirits, and in all creatures and things, even in the devils, as I told thee. And although she also sees the injury done to me, which before caused her sorrow, it no longer now can give her pain, but only compassion, because she loves without pain, and prays to me continually with affection of love, that I will have mercy on the world. Pain in her is ended, but not love, as the tortured desire which my Word, the Son, had borne from the beginning when I sent him into the world, terminated on the cross in his painful death, but his love—no. For had the affection of my charity, which I showed you by means of him, been terminated and ended then, you would not be, because by love you are made, and had my love been drawn back,

that is, had I not loved your being, you could not be, but my love created you, and my love possesses you, because I am one thing with my Truth, and he, the Word incarnate with me. Thou seest then, that the saints and every soul in eternal life have desire for the salvation of souls without pain, because pain ended in their death, but not so the affection of love.

"Thus, as if drunk with the blood of the Immaculate Lamb, and clothed in the love of the neighbour, they pass through the narrow gate, bathed in the blood of Christ crucified, and they find themselves in me, the sea pacific, raised from imperfection, far from satiety, and arrived at perfection, satisfied by every good."

CHAPTER LXXXIII

How after Saint Paul was drawn to the glory of the blessed, he desired to be loosened from the body, as they do who have reached the aforesaid third and fourth states.

"PAUL, then, had seen and tasted this good, when I drew him up into the third heaven, that is, into the height of the Trinity, where he tasted and knew my Truth, receiving fully the Holy Spirit, and learning the doctrine of my Truth, the Word Incarnate. The soul of Paul was clothed through feeling and union, in me, Eternal Father, like the blessed ones in eternal life, except that his soul was not separated from his body, except through his feeling and union. But it being pleasing to my goodness to make of him a vessel of election in the abyss of me, Eternal Trinity, I dispossessed him of myself, because on me can no pain fall, and I wished him to suffer for my name; therefore I placed before him, as an object for the eyes of his intellect, Christ crucified, clothing him with the garment of his doctrine, binding and fettering him with the clemency of the Holy Spirit and inflaming him with the fire of charity. He became a vessel, disposed and reformed by my goodness, and, on being struck, made no resistance, but said:

'*My Lord, what dost thou wish me to do? Show me that which it is thy pleasure for me to do, and I will do it.*' Which I answered when I placed before him Christ crucified, clothing him with the doctrine of my charity. I illuminated him perfectly with the light of true contrition, by which he extirpated his defects, and founded him in my charity."

CHAPTER LXXXIV

How the soul who finds herself in the unitive state desires infinitely to leave the barren earthly state and unite herself to GOD.

"AND when I depart from the soul in the aforesaid way that the body may return a little to its corporal sentiment, the soul, on account of the union which she had made with me, is impatient in her life, being deprived of union with me, and the conversation of the immortals, who render glory to me, and finding herself amid the conversation of mortals, and seeing them so miserably offending me. This vision of my offence is the torture which such souls always have, and which, with the desire to see me, renders their life insupportable to them. Nevertheless, as their will is not their own, but becomes one with mine, they cannot desire other than what I desire, and though they desire to come and be with me, they are contented to remain, if I desire them to remain, with their pain, for the greater praise and glory of my name and the salvation of souls. So that in nothing are they in discord with my will; but they run their course with ecstatic desire, clothed in Christ crucified, and keeping by the Bridge of his doctrine; glorying in his shame and pains. Inasmuch as they appear to be suffering they are rejoicing, because the enduring of many tribulations is to them a relief in the desire which they have for death, for oftentimes the desire and the will to suffer pain mitigates the pain caused them by their desire to quit the body. These not only endure with patience, as I told thee they did, who are in the third

state, but they glory, through my name, in bearing much tribulation. In bearing tribulation they find pleasure, and not having it they suffer pain, fearing that I reward not their well-doing or that the sacrifice of their desires is not pleasing to me; but when I permit to them many tribulations they rejoice, seeing themselves clothed with the suffering and shame of Christ crucified. Wherefore were it possible for them to have virtue without toil they would not want it. They would rather delight in the cross, with Christ, acquiring it with pain, than in any other way obtain eternal life. Why? Because they are inflamed and steeped in the blood, where they find the blaze of my charity, which charity is a fire proceeding from me, ravishing their heart and mind and making their sacrifices acceptable. Wherefore the eye of the intellect is lifted up and gazes into my Deity, when the affection behind the intellect is nourished and united with me. This is a sight which I grant to the soul, infused with grace, who, in truth, loves and serves me."

CHAPTER LXXXV.

How they who are arrived at the aforesaid unitive state, have the eye of their intellect illuminated by supernatural light infused by grace. And how it is better to go for counsel for the salvation of the soul to a humble and holy conscience than to a proud lettered man.

"WITH this light that is given to the eye of the intellect, Thomas Aquinas saw me, wherefore he acquired the light of much science; also Augustine, Jerome, and the doctors, and my saints. They were illuminated by my Truth to know and understand my Truth in darkness. By my Truth I mean the holy Scripture, which seemed dark because it was not understood; not through any defect of the Scriptures, but of them who heard them, and did not understand them. Wherefore I sent this light to illuminate the blind and coarse understanding, uplifting the eye of the intellect to know the Truth. And I, Fire, acceptor of

sacrifices, ravishing away from them their darkness, give the light; not a natural light, but a supernatural, so that, though in darkness, they know the Truth. Wherefore that which at first appeared to be dark, now appears with the most perfect light, to the gross or subtle mind; and every one receives according as he is capable or disposed to know me, for I do not despise dispositions. So thou seest that the eye of the intellect has received supernatural light, infused by grace, by which the doctors and saints knew light in darkness, and of darkness made light. The intellect was before the Scriptures were formed, wherefore from the intellect came science, because in seeing they discerned. It was thus that the holy prophets and fathers understood, who prophesied of the coming and death of my Son, and the apostles, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, which gave them that supernatural light. The evangelists, doctors, confessors, virgins and martyrs were all likewise illuminated by the aforesaid perfect light. And everyone has had the illumination of this light according as he needed it for his salvation or that of others, or for the exposition of the Scriptures. The doctors of the holy science had it, expounding the doctrine of my Truth, the preaching of the apostles, and the gospels of the evangelists. The martyrs had it, declaring in their blood the most holy faith, the fruit and the treasure of the blood of the Lamb. The virgins had it in the affection of charity and purity. To the obedient ones is declared, by it, the obedience of the Word, showing them the perfection of obedience, which shines in my Truth, who for the obedience that I imposed upon him, ran to the opprobrious death of the cross. This light is to be seen in the Old and New Testament; in the Old, by it, were seen by the eye of the intellect, and known the prophecies of the holy prophets. In the New Testament of the evangelical life, how is the gospel declared to the faithful? By this same light. And because the New Testament proceeded from the same light, the new law did not break the old law; rather are the two laws bound together, the imperfection of the old law, founded in fear

alone, being taken from it, by the coming of the Word of my only-begotten Son, with the law of love, completing the old law by giving it love, and replacing the fear of penalty by holy fear. And therefore said my Truth to the disciples, to show that he was not a breaker of laws: '*I came not to dissolve the law, but to fulfil it.*' It is almost as if my Truth would say to them—the law is now imperfect, but with my blood I will make it perfect, and I will fill it up with what it lacks, taking away the fear of penalty, and founding it in love and holy fear. How was this declared to be the Truth? By this same supernatural light, which was and is given by grace to all, who will receive it? Every light that comes from holy Scripture comes and came from this supernatural light. Ignorant and proud men of science were blind notwithstanding this light, because their pride and the cloud of self-love had covered up and put out the light. Wherefore they understood the holy Scripture rather literally than with understanding, and taste only the letter of it, still desiring many other books; and they get not to the marrow of it, because they have deprived themselves of the light, with which is found and expounded the Scripture; and they are annoyed and murmur, because they find much in it that appears to them gross and idiotic. And, nevertheless, they appear to be much illuminated in their knowledge of Scripture, as if they had studied it for long; and this is not remarkable, because they have of course the natural light from whence proceeds science. But because they have lost the supernatural light, infused by grace, they neither see nor know my goodness, nor the grace of my servants. Wherefore I say to thee, that it is much better to go for counsel for the salvation of the soul to a holy and upright conscience, than to a proud lettered man, learned in much science, because such a one can only offer what he has himself, and because of his darkness it may appear to thee that, from what he says, the Scriptures offer darkness. The contrary wilt thou find with my servants, because they offer the light that is in them, with hunger and desire for the soul's salvation. This I have told thee, my

sweetest daughter, that thou mightest know the perfection of this unitive state, when the eye of the intellect is ravished by the fire of my charity, in which charity it receives the supernatural light. With this light the souls in the unitive state love me, because love follows the intellect, and the more it knows the more can it love. Thus the one feeds the other, and with this light they both arrive at the eternal vision of me, where they see and taste me, in Truth, the soul being separated from the body, as I told thee when I spoke to thee of the blissfulness that the soul received in me. This state is most excellent, when the soul, being yet in the mortal body, tastes bliss with the immortals, and ofttimes she arrives at so great a union that she scarcely knows whether she be in the body or out of it; and tastes the earnest-money of eternal life, both because she is united with me, and because her will is dead in Christ, by which death her union was made with me, and in no other way could she perfectly have done so. Therefore do they taste life eternal, deprived of the hell of their own will, which gives to man the earnest-money of damnation, if he yield to it."

CHAPTER LXXXVI

A useful repetition of many things already said, and how God leads this devout soul to pray to him for every creature, and for the holy Church.

"NOW thou hast seen, with the eye of thy intellect, and heard, with the ear of thy feeling, from me, Eternal Truth, what method thou must hold to make use of this doctrine for thyself, and thy neighbour, and to know my Truth. As I told thee in the beginning, a knowledge of Truth is arrived at through a knowledge of self. Not a pure knowledge of self, but a knowledge of self seasoned and united with a knowledge of me. Wherefore thou foundest humility and hatred and displeasure of thyself and the fire of my charity, through the knowledge that thou foundest

of thyself from whence thou camest to love and take delight in thy neighbour, bringing him to a holy and honest life, by means of the doctrine. I have also shown thee the Bridge, and the three general steps, placed there for the three powers of the soul, and I have told thee how no one can attain to the life of grace unless he has mounted all three steps, that is, gathered together all the three powers of the soul in my name. I have also made known to thee, in particular, the three states of the soul, figured in the body of my only-begotten Son, of whom I told thee that he had made of his body a staircase, showing it to thee in his nailed feet, and in the opening of his side, and in his mouth, where the soul attains to peace and quiet in the way that I told thee. And I have shown thee the imperfection of servile fear, and the imperfection of the love, that is only for the sweetness found in me, and I have shown thee the perfection of the third state, namely, of those who have arrived at the peace of the mouth, having run, with anxious desire, by the Bridge of Christ crucified, ascending the three general steps, that is, gathering together in my name the three powers of the soul and all their functions, as I explained to thee more clearly above, and thus have ascended the three principal steps, that is, passed from the imperfect state to the perfect. And so hast thou seen them run in truth, and taste with satisfaction the perfection of the soul, with the odour of the virtues. Thou hast also seen the deceptions into which they fall before they arrive at perfection, if they do not exercise themselves in the knowledge of me and of themselves. I have also declared to thee the misery of those who are drowned in the river, because they keep not by the Bridge of the doctrine of Christ crucified, the which I placed there that they might not be drowned. But they, as if they were mad, would drown in the misery and filth of the world. All these things have I declared to thee to increase in thee the fire of holy desire, and compassion and sorrow for the damnation of souls, and that thy sorrow and love might constrain thee to urge me, with tears and sweat and humble and continual prayer, offered to me with the fire of most

ardent desire, to have mercy on the world. And that not only thou, but many others of my creatures and servants who may hear these things, might be constrained to urge me to have mercy on the world and particularly on the mystic body of the holy Church. I have already told thee, if thou remember well, that I would fulfil all thy desires, giving thee refreshment in thy toil, and satisfying the pain of thy desires, reforming the Church with holy and good pastors. Not reforming her by war, or the knife or cruelty, as I told thee, but by peace and quiet and by the tears and sweat of my servants, whom I have placed as labourers for souls in the mystic body of the Church, labouring for them in virtue, in example and in doctrine, offering to me, for the Church and every creature, continual prayer, bringing forth the virtues on their neighbour in the way I have told thee, because every virtue and every fault is increased by its relation to the neighbour. Wherefore I wish you all to be of service to your neighbour, and thus to bear fruit. Cease not to cast up before me the incense of fragrant prayers for the salvation of souls, because with those prayers, tears and sweatings will I wash the face of my spouse, the holy Church. I have already shown her to thee under the form of a damsel, her face all befouled, as if with leprosy. And this is on account of the sins of my ministers and of the whole Christian people who feed at the breast of this my spouse, and of whose sins I will speak to thee in another place."

CHAPTER LXXXVII

How this devout soul seeks knowledge from God concerning the state and fruit of tears.

THEN this soul, yearning with very great desire, and rising as one intoxicated both by the union which she had had with God, and by what she had heard and tasted of the supreme and sweet Truth, yearned with grief over the ignorance of creatures, in that they did not know their

benefactor, or the affection of the love of God. And nevertheless she had joy from the hope of the promise that the Truth of God had made to her, teaching her the way she was to direct her will (and the other servants of God as well as herself) in order that he should do mercy to the world. And lifting up the eye of her intellect upon the sweet Truth, to whom she remained united, wishing to know somewhat of the aforesaid states of the soul of which God had spoken to her, and seeing that the soul passes through these states with tears, she wished to learn from the Truth concerning the different kinds of tears, and how they came to be, and whence they proceeded, and the fruit that resulted from weeping. Wishing then to know this from the sweet, supreme and first Truth, as to the manner of being and reason of the aforesaid tears, and inasmuch as the truth cannot be learnt from any other than from the Truth himself, and nothing can be learnt in the Truth but what is seen by the eye of the intellect, she made her request of the Truth. For it is necessary for him who is lifted with desire to learn the Truth with the light of faith.

Wherefore, knowing that she had not forgotten the teaching which the Truth, that is, God, had given her, that in no other way could she learn about the different states and fruits of tears, she rose out of herself, exceeding every limit of her nature with the greatness of her desire. And with the light of a lively faith, she opened the eye of her intellect upon the Eternal Truth, in whom she saw and knew the Truth, in the matter of her request, for God himself manifested it to her, and condescending in his benignity to her burning desire, fulfilled her petition.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

How there are five kinds of tears.

THEN said the supreme and sweet Truth of God, "O beloved and dearest daughter, thou beggest knowledge of the reasons and fruits of tears, and I have not despised thy desire. Open well the eye of thy intellect and I will show thee, among the aforesaid states of the soul, of which I have told thee, concerning the imperfect tears caused by fear; but first rather of the tears of wicked men of the world. These are the tears of damnation. The former are those of fear, and belong to men who abandon sin from fear of punishment, and weep for fear. The third are the tears of those who, having abandoned sin, are beginning to serve and taste me, and weep for very sweetness; but since their love is imperfect, so also is their weeping, as I have told thee. The fourth are the tears of those who have arrived at the perfect love of their neighbour, loving me without any regard whatsoever for themselves. These weep and their weeping is perfect. The fifth are joined to the fourth, and are tears of sweetness let fall with great peace, as I will explain to thee. I will tell thee also of the tears of fire, without bodily tears of the eyes, which satisfy those who often would desire to weep and cannot. And I wish thee to know that all these various graces may exist in one soul, who, rising from fear and imperfect love, reaches perfect love in the unitive state. Now I will begin to tell thee of these tears in the following way."

CHAPTER LXXXIX

Of the difference of these tears, arising from the explanation of the aforesaid states of the soul.

"I WISH thee to know that every tear proceeds from the heart, for there is no member of the body that will satisfy the heart so much as the eye. If the heart is in pain the

eye manifests it. And if the pain be sensual the eye drops hearty tears which engender death, because proceeding from the heart, they are caused by a disordinate love distinct from the love of me; for such love, being disordinate and an offence to me, receives the meed of mortal pain and tears. It is true that their guilt and grief are more or less heavy, according to the measure of their disordinate love. And these form that first class, who have the tears of death, of whom I have spoken to thee, and will speak again. Now begin to consider the tears which give the commencement of life, the tears, that is, of those who, knowing their guilt, set to weeping for fear of the penalty they have incurred.

"These are both hearty and sensual tears, because the soul, not having yet arrived at perfect hatred of its guilt on account of the offence thereby done to me, abandons it with a hearty grief for the penalty which follows the sin committed, while the eye weeps in order to satisfy the grief of the heart.

"But the soul, exercising herself in virtue, begins to lose her fear, knowing that fear alone is not sufficient to give her eternal life, as I have already told thee when speaking of the second stage of the soul. And so she proceeds, with love, to know herself in my goodness in her, and begins to take hope in my mercy in which her heart feels joy. Sorrow for her grief, mingled with the joy of her hope in my mercy, causes her eye to weep, which tears issue from the very fountain of her heart.

"But, inasmuch as she has not yet arrived at great perfection, she often drops sensual tears, and if thou askest me why, I reply: Because the root of self-love is not sensual love, for that has already been removed, as has been said, but it is a spiritual love with which the soul desires spiritual consolations or loves some creature spiritually. (I have spoken to thee at length regarding the imperfections of such souls.) Wherefore, when such a soul is deprived of the thing she loves, that is, internal or external consolation, the internal being the consolation received from me, the external being that which she had from the

creature, and when temptations and the persecutions of men come on her, her heart is full of grief. And, as soon as the eye feels the grief and suffering of the heart, she begins to weep with a tender and compassionate sorrow, pitying herself with the spiritual compassion of self-love; for her self-will is not yet crushed and destroyed in everything, and in this way she lets fall sensual tears—tears, that is, of spiritual passion. But growing, and exercising herself in the light of self-knowledge, she conceives displeasure at herself and finally perfect self-hatred. From this she draws true knowledge of my goodness with a fire of love, and she begins to unite herself to me, and to conform her will to mine, and so to feel joy and compassion. Joy in herself through the affection of love, and compassion for her neighbour, as I told thee in speaking of the third stage. Immediately her eye, wishing to satisfy the heart, cries with hearty love for me and for her neighbour, grieving solely for my offence and her neighbour's loss, and not for any penalty or loss due to herself; for she does not think of herself, but only of rendering glory and praise to my name, and in an ecstasy of desire she joyfully takes the food prepared for her on the table of the holy cross, thus conforming herself to the humble, patient, and immaculate Lamb, my only-begotten Son, of whom I made a Bridge, as I have said. Having thus sweetly travelled by that Bridge, following the doctrine of my sweet Truth, enduring with true and sweet patience every pain and trouble which I have permitted to be inflicted upon her for her salvation, having manfully received them all, not choosing them according to her own tastes, but accepting them according to mine, and not only, as I said, enduring them with patience, but sustaining them with joy, she counts it glory to be persecuted for my name's sake in whatever she may have to suffer. Then the soul arrives at such delight and tranquillity of mind that no tongue can tell it. Having crossed the river by means of the Eternal Word, that is, by the doctrine of my only-begotten Son, and, having fixed the eye of her intellect on me, the sweet supreme Truth, having seen the Truth,

she knows it; and knowing it, loves it. Drawing her affection after her intellect, she tastes my Eternal Deity, and she knows and sees the divine nature united to your humanity.

"Then she reposes in me, the sea pacific, and her heart is united to me in love, as I told thee when speaking of the fourth and unitive state. When she thus feels me, the Eternal Deity, her eyes let fall tears of sweetness, tears indeed of milk, nourishing the soul in true patience; an odoriferous ointment are these tears, shedding odours of great sweetness.

"O best beloved daughter, how glorious is that soul who has indeed been able to pass from the stormy ocean to me, the sea pacific, and in that sea, which is myself, the supreme and eternal Deity, to fill the pitcher of her heart. And her eye, the conduit of her heart, endeavours to satisfy her heart-pangs, and so sheds tears. This is the last stage in which the soul is blessed and sorrowful.

"Blessed she is through the union which she feels herself to have with me, tasting the divine love; sorrowful through the offences which she sees done to my goodness and greatness, for she has seen and tasted the bitterness of this in her self-knowledge, by which self-knowledge, together with her knowledge of me, she arrived at the final stage. Yet this sorrow is no impediment to the unitive state, which produces tears of great sweetness through self-knowledge, gained in love of the neighbour, in which exercise the soul discovers the plaint of my divine mercy, and grief at the offences caused to her neighbour, weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice —that is, who live in my love. Over these the soul rejoices, seeing glory and praise rendered me by my servants, so that the third kind of grief does not prevent the fourth, that is, the final grief belonging to the unitive state; they rather give savour to each other, for, had not this last grief (in which the soul finds such union with me) developed from the grief belonging to the third state of neighbourly love, it would not be perfect. Therefore it is necessary that the one should flavour the other, else the

soul would come to a state of presumption, induced by the subtle breeze of love of her own reputation, and would fall at once, vomited from the heights to the depths. Therefore it is necessary to bear with others and practise continually love to one's neighbour, together with true knowledge of oneself.

"In this way will she feel the fire of my love in herself, because love of her neighbour is developed out of love of me—that is, out of that learning which the soul obtained by knowing herself and my goodness in her. When, therefore, she sees herself to be ineffably loved by me, she loves every rational creature with the self-same love with which she sees herself to be loved. And for this reason the soul that knows me immediately expands to the love of her neighbour, because she sees that I love that neighbour ineffably, and so, herself, loves the object which she sees me to have loved still more. She further knows that she can be of no use to me and can in no way repay me that pure love with which she feels herself to be loved by me, and therefore endeavours to repay it through the medium which I have given her, namely, her neighbour, who is the medium through which you can all serve me. For, as I have said to thee, you can perform all virtues by means of your neighbour, I having given you all creatures, in general and in particular, according to the diverse graces each has received from me, to be ministered unto by you; you should therefore love them with the same pure love with which I have loved you. That pure love cannot be returned directly to me, because I have loved you without being myself loved, and without any consideration of myself whatsoever, for I loved you without being loved by you—before you existed; it was, indeed, love that moved me to create you to my own image and similitude. This love you cannot repay to me, but you can pay it to my rational creature, loving your neighbour without being loved by him and without consideration of your own advantage, whether spiritual or temporal, but loving him solely for the praise and glory of my name, because he has been loved by me.

"Thus will you fulfil the commandment of the law, to love me above everything, and your neighbour as yourselves.

"True indeed is it that this height cannot be reached without passing through the second stage, namely the second stage of union which becomes the third (and final) stage. Nor can it be preserved when it has been reached if the soul abandon the affection from which it has been developed, the affection to which the second class of tears belongs. It is therefore impossible to fulfil the law given by me, the Eternal God, without fulfilling that of your neighbour, for these two laws are the feet of your affection by which the precepts and counsels are observed, which were given you, as I have told thee, by my Truth, Christ crucified. These two states united nourish your soul in virtue, making her to grow in the perfection of virtue and in the unitive state. Not that the other state is changed because this further state has been reached, for this further state does not increase the riches of grace in new and various gifts and admirable elevations of the mind, in the knowledge of the truth, as I said to thee, which, though it is mortal, appears immortal because the soul's perception of her own sensuality is mortified and her will is dead through the union which she has attained with me.

"Oh, how sweet is the taste of this union to the soul, for, in tasting it, she sees my secrets! Wherefore she often receives the spirit of prophecy, knowing the things of the future. This is the effect of my goodness, but the humble soul should despise such things, not indeed in so far as they are given her by my love, but in so far as she desires them by reason of her appetite for consolation, considering herself unworthy of peace and quiet of mind, in order to nourish virtue within her soul. In such a case let her not remain in the second stage, but return to the valley of self-knowledge. I give her this light, my grace permitting, so that she may ever grow in virtue. For the soul is never so perfect in this life that she cannot attain to a higher perfection of love. My only-begotten Son, your captain, was the only one who could increase in no perfec-

tion, because he was one thing with me, and I with him, wherefore his soul was blessed through union with the divine nature. But do ye, his pilgrim-members, be ever ready to grow in greater perfection, not indeed to another stage, for as I have said, ye have now reached the last, but to that further grade of perfection in the last stage, which may please you by means of my grace."

CHAPTER XC

A repetition of the preceding chapter: and how the devil flees those who have arrived at the fifth kind of tears, and how the assaults of the devil are the true means of reaching this stage.

"THOU hast now seen the various states of tears and the difference between them, according as it has pleased my Truth to satisfy thy desire. With regard to the first tears of those who are in the state of death, in the guilt, namely of mortal sin, thou hast seen that their sorrow, proceeding in general from their heart, on account of the conception of the principle of the affection which causes tears, is corrupt and miserable sorrow, and indeed their every work is corrupt. The second stage is that of those who are beginning to learn their own evil through the penalty which follows their guilt. This is a general beginning, generously given by me to the fragile, who ignorantly drown in the river, loathing the doctrine of my Truth. But there are many who know their evil without servile fear (fear, that is, of the penalty due to their guilt), who abandon sin with a great self-hatred, which makes them deem themselves worthy of punishment, and who, in their simple goodness, devote themselves to serving me, their Creator, grieving over the offence which they have done me. It is true that he who abandons sin with very great self-hatred is more apt for perfection than the others (those actuated by servile fear), yet both classes may arrive thereat by exercise, though the former will arrive first.

"One of the latter class should take care not to remain

in servile fear, and one of the former should beware of tepidity, that he does not grow cold within, through not exercising his simple goodness. This is a common vocation.

" The third and fourth stages are of those who, having arisen out of fear, have arrived at love and hope, tasting my divine mercy, receiving many gifts and consolations from me, on account of which the eye weeps in order to satisfy the feeling of the heart. But because this sorrow is imperfect and mingled with the sorrow of spiritual self-love, as I have said, the soul must, by exercise in virtue, reach the fourth stage, where, having grown by her desires, she unites and conforms herself to my will to such a point, that she can neither wish nor desire other than what I wish, in the matter of love to her neighbour, from which she extracts the grief of love in herself for the offences and losses inflicted on her neighbour. This stage is united with the fifth and ultimate perfection in which the soul unites herself to the Truth, and the fire of holy desire is increased, from which desire the devil flees, for he can persecute the soul no more, neither by injuring her, for she has grown patient in the love of her neighbour, nor by spiritual or temporal consolation, because through self-hatred and true humility she despises both. True indeed it is that the devil, for his part, never sleeps, thus reading a lesson to you negligent ones, who sleep through the time of merit. But all his watching cannot hurt such as these, because he cannot endure the heat of their love, nor the odour of the union which they have made with me, the sea pacific; while a soul thus united to me cannot be deceived. So he avoids such a soul as a fly the boiling kettle, from fear of the fire. The following however happens to the soul before she has reached perfection. The devil, seeing that she seems tepid, enters into her with many and diverse temptations. But the soul, being in the sea of knowledge, heat, and hatred of guilt, resists, binding the will, for fear it should consent, with the bands of hatred of sin and love of virtue. Let every soul that experiences many temptations rejoice, for through them lies the road

to this glorious and sweet state. For I have already told thee that by knowledge and hatred of yourselves and knowledge of me, ye could arrive at perfection. At no time does the soul know so well whether I am in her or no, as in the time of battle. Thou askest, in what way? I will tell thee. If she know well, seeing herself in battle, that she cannot liberate herself, or resist the perverse will, for she has nothing of her own with which to do so. (She can indeed resist the perverse will, in the sense of not consenting to it, but in no other sense.) And then she learns that she herself is nothing, for were she anything in her own power, she could cause this battle, which is against her will, to cease. Thus she humbles herself with true self-knowledge, and, with the light of the most holy faith, runs to me, the Eternal God, through whose goodness she is able to preserve a good and holy will that does not consent in the time of battle, or yield to the miseries with which it is assailed. You are then quite right to comfort yourselves with the doctrine of the sweet and amorous Word, my only-begotten Son, in the time of your troubles and adversities and temptations from men or devils, for these increase your virtue and cause you to arrive at great perfection."

CHAPTER XCI

How those who desire the tears of the eyes and cannot have them, have tears of fire; and why God withdraws from them physical tears.

"I HAVE spoken to thee of perfect and imperfect tears, and how all of them issue from the heart. From this vessel comes every kind of tear, whatever be the cause of it; they may therefore all be called hearty tears. The sole difference lies between ordinate and disordinate love, between perfect and imperfect love, as I have said to thee above. I have yet to tell thee, in order to satisfy the request thou didst make to me, of those who long for the perfection of

tears, but apparently cannot have it. Have they any other way of weeping besides the tears of the eyes? Yes, they have the weeping of fire, namely, of true and holy desire, by which they are consumed through the affection of love and long to melt their life away in weeping, out of self-hatred, and for the salvation of souls, and yet it seems that they cannot. These, I say, have the tears of fire, in which the Holy Spirit weeps before me for them and their neighbour. Thus, I say, does my divine love light up with its flame the soul who offers anxious desires before me, without bodily tears. These, I say, are the tears of fire, and in this way does the Holy Spirit lament. Not being able to do so with tears, he offers the will and desires of weeping for love of me. If thou openest the eye of thy intellect, thou wilt see that the Holy Spirit laments by means of every servant of mine who sheds holy desires and humble, continual prayers before me. This, it would seem, is what the glorious Apostle Paul meant when he said that the Holy Spirit grieved before me, the Father, with unutterable groanings for you.

"Wherefore see that the tears of fire have no less fruit than those of water, often indeed more, according to the measure of the love from which they proceed. A soul, then, who desires tears and cannot have them, should not be put to confusion of mind, or think that she is deprived of anything by me. She should desire tears with a will humbled, attuned to mine, desiring them or not, according as pleases my divine goodness. Sometimes I do not permit the soul to shed tears physically, in order that she may remain before me humbled in continual prayer, inasmuch as to grant her request would not be of the use to her that she thinks. For she would remain content with having received what she had asked for, and so her affection would grow weak, together with the desire with which she had been accustomed to ask for it. So, for the sake of the growth, and not the turning back of souls, do I reserve the right of not granting actual tears, but I sometimes grant them mentally and of the heart only, full of the fire of my divine love. In every state, therefore, and in

every time will my servants be pleasing to me, if they never let the eye of their intellect lose sight of the object of my Eternal Truth in the light of faith, with the effect of love. I am the Physician and you the patients, and I give each of you what is necessary for his salvation, and for the growth of perfection in his soul. This is the truth and the explanation of the states of tears, which I, the Eternal Truth, have given thee, my most sweet daughter. Drown thyself then in the blood of Christ crucified, the humble and immaculate Lamb, marked with the cross, growing continually in virtue, so that thou mayest be nourished internally with the fire of my divine love."

CHAPTER XCII

How the four stages of the soul, to which belong the five aforesaid states of tears, produce tears of infinite value: and how God wishes to be served as the Infinite, and not as anything finite.

"THESE five states are like five principal canals which are filled with abundant tears of infinite value, all of which give life if they are disciplined in virtue, as I have said to thee. Thou askest how their value can be infinite. I do not say that in this life your tears can become infinite, but I call them infinite, on account of the infinite desire of your soul from which they proceed. I have already told thee how tears come from the heart, and how the heart distributes them to the eye, having gathered them in its own fiery desire. As, when green wood is on the fire, the moisture it contains groans on account of the heat, because the wood is green, so does the heart, made green again by the renovation of grace drawn into itself among its self-love which dries up the soul, so that fiery desire and tears are united. And inasmuch as desire is never ended, it is never satisfied in this life, but the more the soul loves the less she seems to herself to love. Thus is holy desire, which is founded in love, exercised, and with this desire the eye weeps. But when the soul is

separated from the body and has reached me, her end, she does not on that account abandon desire, so as to no longer yearn for me or love her neighbour, for love has entered into her like a woman bearing the fruits of all other virtues. It is true that suffering is over and ended, as I have said to thee, for the soul that desires me possesses me in very truth, without any fear of ever losing that which she has so long desired; but, in this way, hunger is kept up, because those who are hungry are satisfied, and as soon as they are satisfied hunger again; in this way their satiety is without disgust, and their hunger without suffering, for in me no perfection is wanting.

"Thus is your desire infinite, otherwise it would be worth nothing, nor would any virtue of yours have any life if you served me with anything finite. For I, who am the infinite God, wish to be served by you with infinite service, and the only infinite thing you possess is the affection and desire of your souls. In this sense I said that there were tears of infinite value, and this is true as regards their mode, of which I have spoken, namely, of the infinite desire which is united to the tears. When the soul leaves the body the tears remain behind, but the affection of love has drawn to itself the fruit of the tears, and consumed it, as happens in the case of the water in your furnace. The water has not really been taken out of the furnace, but the heat of the fire has consumed it and drawn it into itself. Thus the soul, having arrived at tasting the fire of my divine charity, and having passed from this life in a state of love towards me and her neighbour, having further possessed that unitive love which caused her tears to fall, does not cease to offer me her blessed desires, tearful indeed, though without pain or physical weeping, for physical tears have evaporated in the furnace, becoming tears of fire of the Holy Spirit. Thou seest then how tears are infinite, how, as regards the tears shed in this life only, no tongue can tell what different sorrows may cause them. I have now told thee the difference between four of these states of tears."

CHAPTER XCIII

Of the fruit of worldly men's tears.

"It remains for me to tell thee of the fruit produced by tears shed with desire, and received into the soul. But first will I speak to thee of that first class of men whom I mentioned at the beginning of this my discourse; those that is, who live miserably in the world, making a god of created things and of their own sensuality, from which comes damage to their body and soul. I said to thee that every tear proceeded from the heart, and this is the truth, for the heart grieves in proportion to the love it feels. So worldly men weep when their heart feels pain, that is, when they are deprived of something which they loved.

"But many and diverse are their complainings. Dost thou know how many? There are as many as there exist different loves. And inasmuch as the root of self-love is corrupt, everything that grows from it is corrupt also. Self-love is a tree on which grow nothing but fruits of death, putrid flowers, stained leaves, branches bowed down, and struck by various winds. This is the tree of the soul. For ye are all trees of love, and without love ye cannot live, for ye have been made by me for love. The soul who lives virtuously, places the root of her tree in the valley of true humility; but those who live thus miserably are planted on the mountain of pride, whence it follows that since the root of the tree is badly planted, the tree can bear no fruits of life but only of death. Their fruits are their actions, which are all poisoned by many and diverse kinds of sin, and if they should produce some good fruit among their actions, even it will be spoilt by the foulness of its root, for no good actions done by a soul in mortal sin are of value for eternal life, for they are not done in grace. Let not, however, such a soul abandon on this account its good works, for every good deed is rewarded, and every evil deed punished. A good action performed out of a state of grace is not sufficient to merit eternal life, as has been said, but my justice, my divine goodness,

grants an incomplete reward, imperfect as the action which obtains it. Often such a man is rewarded in temporal matters; sometimes I give him more time in which to repent, as I have already said to thee in another place. This also will I sometimes do, I grant him the life of grace by means of my servants who are pleasing and acceptable to me. I acted in this way with my glorious Apostle Paul, who abandoned his infidelity, and the persecutions he directed against the Christians, at the prayer of St Stephen. See truly, therefore, that, in whatever state a man may be, he should never stop doing good.

"I said to thee that the flowers of this tree were putrid, and so in truth they are. Its flowers are the stinking thoughts of the heart, displeasing to me, and full of hatred and unkindness towards their neighbour. So if a man be a thief, he robs me of honour, and takes it himself. This flower stinks less than that of false judgement, which is of two kinds. The first with regard to me, by which men judge my secret judgements, gauging falsely all my mysteries, that is, judging that which I did in love to have been done in hatred; that which I did in truth to have been done in falsehood; that which I give them for life, to have been given them for death. They condemn and judge everything according to their weak intellect; for they have blinded the eye of their intellect with sensual self-love, and hidden the pupil of the most holy faith, which they will not allow to see or know the Truth. The second kind of false judgement is directed against a man's neighbour, from which often come many evils, because the wretched man wishes to set himself up as the judge of the affections and heart of other rational creatures, when he does not yet know himself. And for an action which he may see, or for a word he may hear, he will judge the affection of the heart. My servants always judge well, because they are founded on me, the Supreme Good; but such as these always judge badly, for they are founded on evil. Such critics as these cause hatreds, murders, unhappinesses of all kinds to their neighbours, and remove themselves far away from the love of my servants' virtue.

"Truly these fruits follow the leaves, which are the words which issue from their mouth in insult to me and the blood of my only-begotten Son, and in hatred to their neighbours. And they think of nothing else but cursing and condemning my works, and blaspheming and saying evil of every rational creature, according as their judgement may suggest to them. The unfortunate creatures do not remember that the tongue is made only to give honour to me, and to confess sins, and to be used in love of virtue, and for the salvation of the neighbour. These are the stained leaves of that most miserable fault, because the heart from which they proceeded was not clean, but all spotted with duplicity and misery. How much danger, apart from the spiritual privation of grace to the soul, of temporal loss may not occur! For ye have all heard and seen how, through words alone, have come revolutions of states, and destructions of cities, and many homicides and other evils, a word having entered the heart of the listener, and having passed through a space not large enough for a knife.

"I say that this tree has seven branches drooping to the earth, on which grow the flowers and leaves in the way I have told you. These branches are the seven mortal sins which are full of many and diverse wickednesses, contained in the roots and trunk of self-love and of pride, which first made both branches and flowers of many thoughts, the leaves of words, and the fruits of wicked deeds. They stand drooping to the earth because the branches of mortal sin can turn no other way than to the earth, the fragile disordinate substance of the world. Do not marvel, they can turn no way but that in which they can be fed by the earth; for their hunger is insatiable, and the earth is unable to satisfy them. They are insatiable and unbearable to themselves, and it is conformable to their state that they should always be unquiet, longing and desiring that thing which they have to satiety. This is the reason why such satiety cannot content them, because they (who are infinite in their being) are always desiring something finite; because their being will never end, though their life to grace ends when they commit mortal sin.

"Man is placed above all creatures, and not beneath them, and he cannot be satisfied or content except in something greater than himself. Greater than himself there is nothing but myself, the Eternal God. Therefore I alone can satisfy him, and, because he is deprived of this satisfaction by his guilt, he remains in continual torment and pain. Weeping follows pain, and when he begins to weep the wind strikes the tree of self-love, which he has made the principle of all his being."

CHAPTER XCIV

How the aforesaid worldly weepers are struck by four different winds.

"THE tree is struck either by the wind of prosperity, or of adversity, or of fear, or of conscience; for these are the four winds. The wind of prosperity matures pride and great self-confidence and reviling of the neighbour. If this wind be master, a man walks in great injustice and vanity of heart, in impurity of body and mind, and self-esteem, and many other things that proceed from these, which thy tongue could not tell. Is this wind of prosperity corrupt in itself? No, neither this nor any other wind; it is the chief root of the tree which is corrupt, and whence everything in the tree is corrupted. I, who send every gift, and give everything its being, am the Supreme Good, and this wind of prosperity which I send is also good.

"The man weeps because his heart is not satisfied, because he desires that which he cannot have, and, being unable to have it, grieves, and grieving weeps, for the eye satisfies the heart.

"After this comes a wind of servile fear, in which he is afraid of his very shadow, fearing to lose either his own life, or his children's, or other creatures'; or again, he fears that he, or others, will lose their positions, honour, or riches (fearing for these others through self-love). This servile fear does not allow him to possess the object of his love in peace, because he does not possess it ordinately

and in obedience to my will, for which reason servile fear pursues him. He has become the miserable slave of sin, and may esteem himself as that for which he serves.

"Meanwhile the wind of fear has done striking him, and the wind of tribulation and adversity, of which he was afraid, reaches him, and deprives him of something either in general or in particular. In general, when the man is deprived of life by the power of death, and so deprived of everything. In particular, when the wind takes away now one thing, now another—either health, or children, or riches, or position, or honour—according as I, the gentle physician, see to be necessary for your salvation. But, because your fragility is wholly corrupt without knowledge or taste, and much less, fruit of patience, impatience, scandals, murmuring, hatred, and displeasure towards me and my creatures grow up in you. And that which I gave you for life ye have received unto death with the same measure of grief that I had of love in giving it. Wherefore the man is led on to the hurtful sorrow of impatience, which dries up the soul and kills her, depriving her of the life of grace, and also dries up and consumes the body, and blinds the man spiritually and corporally, and deprives him of all pleasure and hope, so that he is deprived of the thing which he loved, in which he had placed his affection, his hope, and faith. Wherefore he weeps. Tears alone do not bring such troubles, but the disordinate love and grief of the heart whence the tear proceeds, for physical tears do not themselves give death and sorrow, but the root from which they proceed, namely the disordinate self-love of the heart. If the heart were ordinate and had the life of grace, the tears would also be ordinate, and would constrain me, the Eternal God, to do mercy to the soul. For the tear is the herald of the state of the heart, whether it be in life or death.

"I said that there came one wind of conscience; and this is the doing of my divine goodness, when souls have been tried by prosperity, to bring them through love, and by fear, so that, by my very importunity, their hearts might be directed to love me with virtue proved in tribu-

lation, given them that they might know the fragility and weakness of the world. To others, whom this does not help, I give the prick of conscience, so ineffably do I love them, in order that they may arise, and, opening their mouths, vomit forth the filth of their sins by holy confession. But these, like obstinate fools justly reprobated by me on account of their iniquity, refuse to receive my grace in any way, fly the prick of conscience, and continue to pass their time in miserable pleasures, incurring my wrath and that of their neighbour. All this happens because the root is corrupt together with the whole tree, every part of it is in a state of death, and full of continual sufferings, weepings, and bitterness, as has been said. And if they do not reform while they have time and power to use their free-will, they pass from this finite sorrow, which is theirs in finite time, to infinite sorrow; thus finite sorrow leads to infinite, for the tears were shed with infinite hatred of virtue, namely, with the desire of the soul founded in infinite hate. It is true that, had they wished, they might have abandoned it through my grace in time, while they were free. In spite of my having called hatred infinite it is only so as regards the affection and being of the soul in which it inheres, neither the hatred nor the love existing in the soul are, in themselves, infinite; for while you are in life, you can hate or love only according to your pleasure. But if life ends in a state of love of virtue, the soul receives an infinite good; if in hatred, the soul remains in infinite hatred, receiving eternal damnation, as I have told thee when I related to thee how some drowned themselves in the river. They therefore can no longer desire good, deprived of my mercy, and your brotherly love, which the saints taste together, that is, the love of you pilgrims travelling through this life, placed here by me, in order to reach your end, which is myself, Eternal Life. Neither prayers nor alms nor any good work help the damned. They are members cut off from the body of my divine love, for, while they lived, they would not be joined to the obedience of my holy commandments, in the mystical body of the holy Church, and in her sweet obedience,

whence you draw the blood of the immaculate Lamb, my only-begotten Son; for this do they receive the fruit of eternal damnation, with sorrow and gnashing of teeth. These are those martyrs of the devil of whom I spoke to thee. The devil gives them the fruit which he has himself. See therefore that this kind of sorrow gives the fruit of suffering in this finite time, and ultimately gives, for infinite eternity, the companionship of the devil."

CHAPTER XCV

Of the fruit of the second and third kinds of tears.

"It now falls to me to speak of the fruit received by those who are beginning to rise from guilt, through fear of punishment, and to acquire grace. Some there are who abandon the death of mortal sin through fear of the penalty. This is a very general vocation, as has been said. What fruit does such a one receive? This fruit, that he begins to empty the house of his soul of impurity, cleansing his free-will with fear of punishment. When he has purified his soul of her guilt, he receives peace of conscience, and begins to dispose the affection of his soul, and to open the eye of his intellect, to examine his house, in which formerly, before it was empty, he could see and discern nothing but the stench of various sins. He begins to receive consolation, for the worm of conscience remains in peace, waiting, as it were, to feast on the food of virtue. As a man who has cured his stomach, and purged it of its humours, directs his appetite to food, so he waits until the hand of free-will prepares the table for him, with love of the food of virtue, after which preparation he expects to eat. And thus in truth, by exercising his soul in the first fear, and emptying his affection of all sins, he receives the second fruit, that is, the second state of tears, in which the soul, endued by the affection of love, begins to furnish the house of virtue, and the soul, although still imperfect (we will suppose she has just risen from fear),

receives consolation and delight, because her love has received pleasure from my Truth. And, through the delight and consolation which he finds in me, he begins to love me very sweetly, feeling the sweetness of my consolation, and that of creatures through me. Thus, exercising love, who has entered into him in the house of his soul, as soon as fear has purified it, he begins to receive the fruits of my divine goodness.

"Wherefore, after love has entered the house of his soul to possess it, he begins to taste many, various and divers fruits of consolation. And persevering, he at last receives the fruit of laying the table, when his soul has passed from fear to the love of virtue, having arrived at the third kind of tears. So he lays the table of the holy cross in his heart and in his soul; this is the table that he lays, because thereon he finds the fruit of the sweet and amorous Word declaring the honour of me, his Father and your salvation, for which was opened my only-begotten Son's body, giving himself to you in food: then he begins to eat in honour of me, and for the salvation of souls, with hatred and displeasure of sin. What fruit does the soul receive from this third state of tears? I tell thee. She receives a certain strength founded on a holy hatred of her own sensuality, with a pleasant fruit of true humility and patience, which bears every scandal, and saves the soul from all suffering, cutting out self-will, from which arises all suffering, with the knife of hate. (It is only the sensual will that is scandalised at persecutions, or at the loss of spiritual or temporal consolations, as I have before told thee, and thus comes to impatience.) The will being dead, the soul begins to taste with tearful and sweet desire the fruit of the tears of sweet patience.

"O fruit of great sweetness, how sweet art thou to him who tastes thee in bitterness, though he please me and taste my sweetness!

"In time of injury thou receivest peace, for if thou art on the stormy sea, and perilous winds buffet, with great waves, the barque of the soul, thou remainest peaceful and tranquil, without any evil, covering the boat with the sweet

eternal will of God, whence thou hast received thy robe of true and burning charity, into which water cannot enter. This patience is indeed, my dearest daughter, a very queen standing on the rock of fortitude. She conquers, and is never conquered; she does not stand alone, but is accompanied by perseverance. She is the marrow of charity, she it is who shows whether the garment of charity be the nuptial garment or not; for if it be torn by imperfection, at once the contrary effect of impatience is proved.

"All virtues can at one time or other hide, appearing to be perfect when they are imperfect, but to thee, O patience, they cannot be hid. For if this sweet patience, the marrow of charity, be in the soul, she proves that all the virtues are living and perfect, and if she be not there, she shows that all the virtues are imperfect and have not yet attained to the table of the holy cross, where patience is conceived in self-knowledge and in knowledge of my goodness to the soul, and brought forth by means of holy hatred and anointed with true humility. To this patience is not denied the food of my honour, and the salvation of souls; indeed, she eats of it continually, and this is the truth. Gaze, dearest daughter, on the sweet and glorious martyrs who, by their endurance, ate the food of souls. Their death gave life, they raised the dead, and dissipated the darkness of mortal sin. The world, with all its grandeurs, and kings, with all their power, could not defend themselves as they did by virtue of the queen, sweet patience. This virtue stands like a lantern on a pole. This is the glorious fruit given by tears, when a man has arrived at love of his neighbour, eating the slain and immaculate Lamb, my only-begotten Son, with painful and anxious desire, and with intolerable pain at the offence done to me, his Creator, not an afflictive pain, because love slays with true patience all fear and self-love which can give pain, but a consolatory suffering, for my offence alone, and the loss of the neighbour, founded in charity, which sorrow fattens the soul, rejoicing in herself, for she has in her sorrow a demonstrative proof that I am present in her by grace."

CHAPTER XCVI

Of the fruit of the fourth and unitive tears.

"I HAVE spoken to thee of the fruit of the third kind of tears; now follows the fourth and last state of unitive tears, which is not separated from the third, but united to it, as has been said, in the same way as love for me is united with love of the neighbour; the one love flavours the other. So greatly has the soul developed in reaching the fourth state, that she not only bears with patience, but even desires with joy, to suffer to such an extent that she despises every recreation from whatever quarter it come, in order that she may be conformed to my Truth, Christ crucified.

"She receives the fruit of quietness of mind, a union with my sweet divine nature, where she tastes the milk, as when the child, who sleeps at peace on the breast of its mother, draws to itself milk by means of the flesh of its mother; so the soul, arrived at this last state, reposes on the breast of my divine charity, keeping in the mouth of holy desire the flesh of Christ crucified, that is, by following his footsteps and doctrine; for the soul learnt well, when she was in the third state, that it was not right for her to come directly to me, the Father, because no penalty could be borne by me, the Eternal Father; but it is otherwise with my beloved Son, the sweet and amorous Word, and therefore it is that you cannot walk without pain, and with much endurance will you attain to proved virtue. So the soul reposes at the breast of Christ crucified, who is the Truth, and thus draws to herself the milk of virtue, in which she finds the life of grace, tasting in herself my divine nature, which gives sweetness to virtue, for truly the virtues are not in themselves sweet unless they are performed in and united to me the divine love, so that the soul may have no regard to her own profit, but only act for my honour and the salvation of souls.

"Now look, sweet daughter, how sweet and glorious is this state, in which the soul has made so close a union with

the breast of charity, that the mouth is not found without the breast, neither the breast without the milk. And so this soul does not find herself without Christ crucified or without me, the Eternal Father, whom she finds, tasting the supreme and Eternal Deity. Oh, who can see how the powers of that soul are filled!

"The memory is filled with continual remembrance of me, which remembrance she draws to herself through love of my benefits, as the affection of charity with which I gave them to her. And particularly the benefit of creation, seeing herself created in my image and similitude, through which benefit, spoken of in the first state, she feels suffering for the ingratitude with which she received it. Wherefore she has arisen from her misery through the benefit of the blood of Christ, with which I recreated her to grace, washing the face of your souls from the leprosy of sin.

"In the second state the soul found sweetness, tasting the sweetness of love, and the displeasure caused her by guilt, as regards which, she sees that so displeasing to me was her guilt, that I punished it in the person of my only-begotten Son.

"Later she discovers the advent of the Holy Spirit, who convinced, and still convinces, the soul of truth. When does the soul receive this light? When she has known my benefits in her, in both the first and the second states. She then receives a perfect light, knowing the truth of me, the Eternal Father, that is, that by love have I created her, in order to give her eternal life.

"For this indeed is the truth, and I have shown it forth to you in the blood of Christ crucified. When the soul has known this love, she loves it, and loving it she proves her love, sincerely loving what I love, and hating what I hate. Thus she finds herself in the third state of love to her neighbour.

"At this breast of love the memory fills itself, forsaking all imperfections, for it recalls and keeps in itself my benefits. The intellect has received light, and looking into the memory, recognises the truth, and having lost the blindness of self-love, remains in its true object the sun

of Christ crucified where it learns to know God and man. Besides this knowledge of union, there rises on the soul a light not acquired by nature, nor obtained through her own virtue, but given her as a grace by my sweet Truth, who does not despise the anxious desires and fatigue that she has offered before me. Then the affection, following the intellect, unites itself with me in a most perfect and ardent love. And if any one should ask me who this soul is? I would reply, 'She is another myself, become so by the union of love.' What tongue can tell the excellence of this last unitive state, and the divine and varied fruits that are received from it, the three powers of the soul being filled! This is that sweet gathering together which I mentioned to thee, in three general steps, in a previous discourse on the words of my Truth.

"The tongue is not sufficient to relate it, but well did the holy doctors, illuminated with this glorious light, prove its nature, for with it they explained the mysteries of holy Scripture. Hence that saying of the glorious Thomas of Aquin, that his learning had come to him rather by means of prayer, elevation of mind, and a divine light infused into his intellect, than by human study. He was a light whom I placed in the mystic body of the holy Church to disperse the shadows of error. Turn to the glorious John the Evangelist—what light did he not acquire on the precious breast of Christ, my Truth! And with this light he preached my Gospel for so long a time. And all the saints have manifested it, some in one way and some in another; but the intrinsic feeling, the ineffable sweetness of this perfect union cannot be told by thy tongue, which is but a finite thing. It would seem that Paul meant this when he said: '*Eye hath not seen what he hath laid up for them that love him.*' Oh, how sweet above all sweetness is that dwelling which the soul has made by perfect union with me! She sheds odours over the whole world, the fruits of continual and humble prayers, the odour of her desire cries out for the salvation of souls, with no human voice, before my divine majesty. These are the fruits of union, eaten by the soul in this life in the last state,

acquired by many fatigues, tears, and sweatings. And thus the soul passes, by true perseverance, from the life of grace and from this union, which, though perfect as far as grace goes, is yet imperfect, to a durable eternal union. I call this union imperfect, because, while the soul is bound in the body in this life, she cannot satiate herself with what she desires, and also because she is bound by the law of sin, of her passions, though these have been put to sleep by her virtue. But the passions are not dead, for they will wake up if the instrument of virtue, which makes them sleep, be removed; for this reason the union is said to be imperfect, but it leads on the soul to receive durable perfection, which can never for any reason be taken away from the soul, because it consists, as I have told thee (in speaking of the blessed), in tasting me in very truth, the Eternal Life, the Supreme and Eternal Good, who never come to an end. These have received eternal life, in contradistinction to those others who have received the fruit of their sorrow, eternal death. They have come from grief to joy, receiving eternal life with the fruit of their tears, shouting with burning love, and offering tears of fire before me for you. And now I have completed the relation of the different states of tears, and of the perfection and fruit which the soul receives from them, and how the perfect receive, on account of them, eternal life, and the wicked, eternal damnation."

CHAPTER XCVII

How this devout soul, thanking God for his explanation of the above-mentioned states of tears, makes three petitions.

THEN this soul, eager with the greatness of her desire, through the sweetness of the explanation and satisfaction which she had received from the Truth, concerning the state of tears, said as one enamoured—"Thanks, thanks be to thee, Supreme and Eternal Father, satisfier of holy desires, and lover of our salvation, who, through thy

love didst give up love himself, in the time of our warfare with thee, in the person of thy only-begotten Son. By this abyss of thy fiery love, I beg of thee grace and mercy that I may come to thee truly in the light, and not flee far in darkness away from thy doctrine, of which thou hast clearly demonstrated to me the truth, so that, by the light thereof, I perceive two other points, concerning which I fear that they are, or may become, stumbling-blocks to me. I beg, Eternal Father, that before I leave the subject of these states of tears, thou wouldst explain these points also to me. The first is—when a person desirous of serving thee comes to me, or to some other servant of thine to ask for counsel, how should I teach him? I know, Sweet and Eternal God, that thou didst reply above to this question—'I am he who takes delight in few words and many deeds.' Nevertheless, if it please thy goodness to grant me a few more words on the subject, it will cause me the greatest pleasure. And also, if on some occasion, when I am praying for thy creatures, and in particular for thy servants, and I seem to see the subjects of my prayer, in one I find (in the course of my prayer) a well-disposed mind, a soul rejoicing in thee; and in another, as it might seem to me, a mind full of darkness; have I the right, O Eternal Father, to judge the one soul to be in light, and the other in darkness? Or, supposing I should see that the one lives in great penance, and the other does not, should I be right to judge that he who does the greater penance has the higher perfection? I pray thee, so that I may not be deceived through my limited vision, that thou wouldst declare to me in detail what thou hast already said in general on this matter. The second request I have to make is, that thou wilt explain further to me about the sign which thou didst say the soul received on being visited by thee—the sign which revealed thy presence. If I remember well, O Eternal Truth, thou didst say that the soul remained in joy and courageous virtue. I would fain know whether this joy can consist with the delusion of the passion of spiritual self-love; for if it were so, I would humbly confine myself

to the sign of virtue. These are the things which I beg thee to tell me, so that I may serve thee and my neighbour in truth, and not fall into false judgement concerning thy creatures and servants. For it seems to me that the habit of judging keeps the soul far from thee, so I do not wish to fall into this snare."

CHAPTER XCVIII

How the light of reason is necessary to every soul that wishes to serve God in truth; and first of the light of reason in general.

THEN the Eternal God, delighting in the thirst and hunger of that soul, and in the purity of her heart, and the desire with which she longed to serve him, turned the eye of his benignity and mercy upon her, saying—"O best-beloved, dearest and sweetest daughter, my spouse! rise out of thyself, and open the eye of thy intellect to see me, the Infinite Goodness, and the ineffable love which I have towards thee and my other servants. And open the ear of the desire which thou feelest towards me, and remember that if thou dost not see, thou canst not hear, that is to say, that the soul that does not see into my Truth with the eye of her intellect, cannot hear or know my Truth, wherefore in order that thou mayest the better know it, rise above the feelings of thy senses.

"And I, who take delight in thy request, will satisfy thy demand. Not that thou canst increase my delight, for I am the cause of thee and of thy increase; not those of mine. Yet the very pleasure that I take in the work of my own hands causes me delight."

Then that soul obeyed and rose out of herself, in order to learn the true solution of her difficulty. And the Eternal God said to her, "In order that thou mayest the better understand what I shall say to thee, I shall revert to the beginning of thy request concerning the three lights which issue from me, the True Light. The first is a general light dwelling in those who live in ordinary charity. (I shall

repeat to thee here many things concerning these lights, which I have already told thee, in spite of my having done so, in order that thy creeping intelligence may better understand that which thou wishest to know.) The other two lights dwell in those who, having abandoned the world, desire perfection. Besides this I will explain to thee thy request, telling thee in great detail that which I have already pointed out to thee in general. Thou knowest, as I have told thee, that, without the light, no one can walk in the truth, that is, without the light of reason, which light of reason you draw from me the True Light, by means of the eye of thy intellect and the light of faith which I have given you in holy baptism, though you may have lost it by your own defects. For, in baptism, and through the mediation of the blood of my only-begotten Son, you have received the form of faith; which faith you exercise in virtue by the light of reason, which gives you life and causes you to walk in the path of truth, and by its means to arrive at me, the True Light, for without it you would plunge into darkness.

"It is necessary for you to have two lights derived from this primary light, and to these two I will also add a third. The first lightens you all to know the transitory nature of the things of the world, all of which pass like the wind. But this you cannot know thoroughly, unless you first recognise your own fragility, how strong is your inclination, through the law of perversity with which your members are bound, to rebel against me, your Creator (not that by this law any man can be constrained to commit any, even the smallest sin, against his will, but that this law of perversity fights lustily against the Spirit). I did not impose this law upon you in order that my rational creature should be conquered by it, but in order that he should prove and increase the virtue of his soul, because virtue cannot be proved except by its contrary. Sensuality is contrary to the spirit, and yet, by means of sensuality, the soul is able to prove the love which she has for me, her Creator. How does she prove it? When, with anger and displeasure, she rises against herself. This

law has also been imposed in order to preserve the soul in true humility. Wherefore thou seest that, while I created the soul to mine own image and similitude, placing her in such dignity and beauty, I caused her to be accompanied by the vilest of all things, imposing on her the law of perversity, imprisoning her in a body, formed of the vilest substance of the earth, so that, seeing in what her true beauty consisted, she should not raise her head in pride against me. Wherefore, to one who possesses this light, the fragility of his body is a cause of humiliation to the soul, and is in no way matter for pride, but rather for true and perfect humility. So that this law does not constrain you to any sin by its strivings, but supplies a reason to make you know yourselves and the instability of the world. This should be seen by the eye of the intellect, with light of the holy faith, of which I said to thee that it was the pupil of the eye. This is that light which is necessary in general to every rational creature, whatever may be his condition, who wishes to participate in the life of grace, in the fruit of the blood of the immaculate Lamb. This is the ordinary light, that is, the light which all persons must possess, as has been said, for without it the soul would be in a state of damnation. And for this reason, because the soul, being without the light, is not in a state of grace, inasmuch as, not having the light, she does not know the evil of her sin or its cause, and therefore cannot avoid or hate it.

"And similarly if the soul know not good, and the reason of good, that is to say, virtue, she cannot love or desire either me, who am the Essential Good, or virtue, which I have given you as an instrument and means for you to receive my grace, and myself the True Good. See then how necessary is this light, for your sins consist in nothing else than in loving that which I hate, and in hating that which I love. I love virtue and hate vice; he who loves vice and hates virtue offends me, and is deprived of my grace. Such a one walks as if blind, for he knows not the cause of vice, that is, his sensual self-love, nor does he hate himself on account of it; he is

ignorant of vice and of the evil which follows it; he is ignorant of virtue and of me, who am the cause of his obtaining life-giving virtue; he is ignorant of his own dignity, which he should maintain by advancing to grace, by means of virtue. See, therefore, how his ignorance is the cause of all his evil, and how thou also needest this light, as has been said."

CHAPTER XCIX

Of those who have placed their desire rather in the mortification of the body than in the destruction of their own will; and of the second light, more perfect than the former general one.

"WHEN the soul has arrived at the attainment of the general light, of which I have spoken, she should not remain contented, because, as long as you are pilgrims in this life, you are capable of growth, and he who does not go forward, by that very fact is turning back. She should either grow in the general light, which she has acquired through my grace, or anxiously strive to attain to the second and perfect light, leaving the imperfect and reaching the perfect. For if the soul truly have light, she will wish to arrive at perfection. In this second perfect light are to be found two kinds of perfection; for they may be called perfect who have abandoned the general way of living of the world. One perfection is that of those who give themselves up wholly to the castigation of the body, doing great and severe penance. These, in order that their sensuality may not rebel against their reason, have placed their desire rather in the mortification of the body than in the destruction of their self-will, as I have explained to thee in another place. These feed their souls at the table of penance, and are good and perfect, if their penance be illuminated by discretion, and founded on me, if, that is to say, they act with true knowledge of themselves and of me, with great humility, and wholly conformed to the judgement of my will, and not to that of the

will of man. But, if they were not thus clothed with my will, in true humility, they would often offend against their own perfection, esteeming themselves the judges of those who do not walk in the same path. Knowest thou why this would happen to them? Because they have placed all their labour and desire in the mortification of the body, rather than in the destruction of their own will. Such as these wish always to choose their own times and places and consolations, after their own fashion, and also the persecutions of the world and of the devil, as I have narrated to thee in speaking of the second state of perfection.

"They say, cheating themselves with the delusion of their own self-will, which I have already called their spiritual self-will, 'I wish to have that consolation, and not these battles, or these temptations of the devil, not, indeed, for my own pleasure, but in order to please God the more, and in order to retain him the more in my soul through grace; because it seems to me that I should possess him more, and serve him better in that way than in this.' And this is the way the soul often falls into trouble, and becomes tedious and insupportable to herself; thus injuring her own perfection; yet she does not perceive it, nor that within her lurks the stench of pride, and there she lies. Now if the soul were not in this condition, but were truly humble and not presumptuous, she would be illuminated to see that I, the primary and sweet Truth, grant condition, and time, and place, and consolations, and tribulations as they may be needed for your salvation, and to complete the perfection to which I have elected the soul. And she would see that I give everything through love, and that therefore, with love and reverence should she receive everything, which is what the souls in the second state do, and by doing so, arrive at the third state. Of whom I will now speak to thee, explaining to thee the nature of these two states which stand in the most perfect light."

CHAPTER C

Of the third and most perfect state, and of reason, and of the works done by the soul who has arrived at this light. And of a beautiful vision which this devout soul once received, in which the method of arriving at perfect purity is fully treated, and the means to avoid judging our neighbour is spoken of.

"THOSE who belong to the third state, which immediately follows the last, having arrived at this glorious light, are perfect in every condition in which they may be, and receive every event which I permit to happen to them with due reverence, as I have mentioned to thee when speaking of the third and unitive state of the soul. These deem themselves worthy of the troubles and stumbling-blocks caused them by the world, and of the privation of their own consolation, and indeed of whatever circumstance happens to them. And inasmuch as they deem themselves worthy of trouble, so also do they deem themselves unworthy of the fruit which they receive after their trouble. They have known and tasted in the light my eternal will, which wishes naught else but your good, and gives and permits these troubles in order that you should be sanctified in me. Wherefore the soul, having known my will, clothes herself with it, and fixes her attention on nothing else except seeing in what way she can preserve and increase her perfection to the glory and praise of my name, opening the eye of her intellect and fixing it in the light of faith upon Christ crucified, my only-begotten Son, loving and following his doctrine, which is the rule of the road for perfect and imperfect alike. And see how my Truth, the Lamb, who became enamoured of her when he saw her, gives the soul the doctrine of perfection. She knows what this perfection is, having seen it practised by the sweet and amorous Word, my only-begotten Son, who was fed at the table of holy desire, seeking the honour of me, the Eternal Father, and your salvation. And inflamed with this desire, he ran with great eagerness to the shameful death of the cross, and accomplished the obedience which was imposed on him by me, his

Father, not shunning labours or insults or withdrawing on account of your ingratitude or ignorance of so great a benefit, or because of the persecutions of the Jews, or on account of the insults, derision, grumbling, and shouting of the people. But all this he passed through like the true captain and knight that he was, whom I had placed on the battlefield to deliver you from the hands of the devil, so that you might be free, and drawn out of the most terrible slavery in which you could ever be, and also to teach you his road, his doctrine, and his rule, so that you might open the door of me, Eternal Life, with the key of his precious blood, shed with such fire of love, with such hatred of your sins. It was as if the sweet and amorous Word, my Son, should have said to you: 'Behold, I have made the road, and opened the door with my blood.' Do not you then be negligent to follow, laying yourselves down to rest in self-love and ignorance of the road, presuming to choose to serve me in your own way, instead of in the way which I have made straight for you by means of my Truth, the Incarnate Word, and built up with his blood. Rise up then promptly and follow him, for no one can reach me, the Father, if not by him; he is the way and the door by which you must enter into me, the sea pacific.

"When therefore the soul has arrived at seeing, knowing, and tasting, in its full sweetness, this light, she runs, as one enamoured and inflamed with love, to the table of holy desire; she does not see herself in herself, seeking her own consolation either spiritual or temporal, but, like one who has placed his all in this light and knowledge, and has destroyed his own will, she shuns no labour, from whatever source it comes, but rather enduring the troubles, the insults, the temptations of the devil, and the murmurings of men, eats at the table of the most holy cross the food of the honour of me, the Eternal God, and of the salvation of souls; seeking no reward, either from me or from creatures, because she is stripped of mercenary love, that is, of love for me based on interested motives, and is clothed in perfect light, loving me in perfect purity, with

no other regard than for the praise and glory of my name, serving neither me for her own delight, nor her neighbour for her own profit, but purely through love alone. Such as these have lost themselves, and have stripped themselves of the old man, that is, of their own sensuality, and, having clothed themselves with the new man, the sweet Christ Jesus, my Truth, follow him manfully. These are they who sit at the table of holy desire, having been more anxious to slay their own will than to slay and mortify their own body. They have indeed mortified their body, though not as an end in itself, but as a means which helps them to slay their own will, as I said to thee when explaining that sentence that I wished few words and many deeds, and so ought you to do. Their principal desire should be to slay their own will, so that it may not seek or wish anything else than to follow my sweet Truth, Christ crucified, seeking the honour and glory of my name and the salvation of souls. Those who are in this sweet light know it, and remain constantly in peace and quiet, and no one scandalises them, for they have cut away that thing by which stumbling-blocks are caused, namely, their own will. And all the persecutions with which the world and the devil can attack them, slide under their feet, standing as they do in the waters of many tribulations and temptations, and do not hurt them, for they remain attached to me by the umbilical cord of fiery desire. Such a man rejoices in everything, nor does he make himself judge of my servants, or of any rational creature, but rejoices in every condition and in every manner of holiness which he sees, saying: 'Thanks be to thee, Eternal Father, who hast in thy house many mansions.' And he rejoices more in the different ways of holiness which he sees, than if he were to see all travelling by one road, because in this way he perceives the greatness of my goodness become more manifest, and thus rejoicing draws from all the fragrance of the rose. And not only in the case of good, but even when he sees something evidently sinful, he does not fall into judgement, but rather into true and holy compassion, inter-

ceding with me for sinners, and saying, with perfect humility: 'To-day it is thy turn, and to-morrow it will be mine, unless the divine grace preserve me.'

"Enamour thyself, dearest daughter, of this sweet and excellent state, and gaze at those who run in this glorious light and holiness, for they have holy minds, and eat at the table of holy desire, and with the light have arrived at feeding on the food of souls, that is, the honour of me, the Eternal Father, being clothed with burning love in the sweet garment of my Lamb, my only-begotten Son, namely, his doctrine. These do not lose their time in passing false judgements, either on my servants or the servants of the world, and they are never scandalised by any murmurings of men, either for their own sake or that of others. That is to say, in their own case they are content to endure anything for my name's sake; and when an injury is done to someone else, they endure it with compassion of this injured neighbour, and without murmuring against him who caused the injury, or him who received it, because their love is not disordinate, but has been ordered in me, the Eternal God.

"And since their love is so ordered, these souls, my dearest daughter, never take offence from those they love, nor from any rational creature, their will being dead and not alive, wherefore they never assume the right to judge the will of men, but only the will of my clemency. These observe the doctrine which, as thou knowest, was given thee by my Truth at the beginning of thy life, when thou wast thinking in what way thou couldst arrive at perfect purity, and wast praying to me with a great desire of doing so. Thou knowest what was replied to thee, while thou wast asleep, concerning this holy desire, and that the words resounded not only in thy mind, but also in thine ear. So much so that, if thou rememberest truly, thou didst return to thy waking body, when my Truth said, 'Wilt thou arrive at perfect purity, and be freed from stumbling-blocks, so that thy mind may not be scandalised by anything?' Unite thyself always to me by the affection of love, for I am the Supreme and Eternal Purity.

I am that fire which purifies the soul, and the closer the soul is to me, the purer she becomes, and the further she is from me, the more does her purity leave her; which is the reason why men of the world fall into such iniquities, for they are separated from me, while the soul who without any medium unites herself directly to me, participates in my purity. Another thing is necessary for thee to arrive at this union and purity, namely, that thou shouldst never judge the will of man in anything that thou mayest see done or said by any creature whatsoever, either to thyself or to others. My will alone shouldst thou consider, both in them and in thyself. And if thou shouldst see evident sins or defects, draw out of those thorns the rose, that is to say, offer them to me, with holy compassion. In the case of injuries done to thyself, judge that my will permits this in order to prove virtue in thyself, and in my other servants, esteeming that he who acts thus does so as the instrument of my will; perceiving, moreover, that such apparent sinners may frequently have a good intention, for no one can judge the secrets of the heart of man. That which thou dost not see thou shouldst not judge in thy mind, even though it may externally be open mortal sin, seeing nothing in others but my will, not in order to judge, but, as has been said, with holy compassion. In this way thou wilt arrive at perfect purity, because acting thus, thy mind will not be scandalised, either in me or in thy neighbour. Otherwise thou fallest into contempt of thy neighbour, if thou judgest his evil will towards thee, instead of my will acting in him. Such contempt and scandal separates the soul from me, and prevents perfection, and in some cases deprives a man of grace, more or less according to the gravity of his contempt, and the hatred which his judgement has conceived against his neighbour.

"A different reward is received by the soul who perceives only my will, which, as has been said, wishes nothing else but your good; so that everything which I give or permit to happen to you, I give so that you may arrive at the end for which I created you. And because

the soul remains always in the love of her neighbour, she remains always in mine, and thus remains united to me. Wherefore, in order to arrive at purity, thou must entreat me to do three things; to grant thee to be united to me by the affection of love, retaining in thy memory the benefits thou hast received from me; and with the eye of thy intellect to see the affection of my love, with which I love you inestimably; and in the will of others to discern my will only, and not their evil will, for I am their judge, not thou, and in doing this, thou wilt arrive at all perfection.

"This was the doctrine given to thee by my Truth, if thou rememberest well. Now I tell thee, dearest daughter, that such as these, who have learnt this doctrine, taste the earnest of eternal life in this life; and if thou hast well retained this doctrine, thou wilt not fall into the snares of the devil, because thou wilt recognise them in the case about which thou hast asked me.

"But nevertheless, in order to satisfy thy desire more clearly, I will tell thee and show thee how men should never discern by judgement, but with holy compassion."

CHAPTER CI

In what way they, who stand in the above-mentioned third most perfect light, receive the earnest of eternal life in this life.

"WHY did I say to thee that they received the earnest of eternal life? I say that they receive the earnest-money, but not the full payment, because they wait to receive it in me, the Eternal Life, where they have life without death, and satiety without disgust, and hunger without pain, for from that divine hunger pain is far away, and though they have what they desire, disgust is far from satiety, for I am the flawless food of life. It is true that, in this life, they receive the earnest, and taste it in this way, namely, that the soul begins to hunger for the honour of the Eternal God, and for the food of the salvation of other

souls, and being hungry, she eats, that is to say, nourishes herself with love of her neighbour, which causes her hunger and desire, for the love of the neighbour is a food which never satiates him who feeds on it, the eater being insatiable and always remains hungry. So this earnest-money is a commencement of a guarantee which is given to man, in virtue of which he expects one day to receive his payment, not through the perfection of the earnest-money in itself, but through faith, through the certitude which he has of reaching the completion of his being and receiving his payment. Wherefore this enamoured soul, clothed in my Truth, having already received in this life the earnest of my love, and of her neighbour's, is not yet perfect, but expects perfection in immortal life. I say that this earnest is not perfect, because the soul who tastes it has not, as yet, the perfection which would prevent her feeling pain in herself, or in others. In herself, through the offence done to me by the law of perversity which is bound in her members and struggles against the spirit, and in others by the offence of her neighbour. She has indeed, in a sense, a perfect grace, but not that perfection of my saints, who have arrived at me, Eternal Life, for, as has been said, their desires are without suffering, and yours are not. These servants of mine, as I have said to thee in another place, who nourish themselves at this table of holy desire, are blessed and full of grief, even as my only-begotten Son was, on the wood of the holy cross, because, while his flesh was in grief and torment, his soul was blessed through its union with the divine nature. In like manner these are blessed by the union of their holy desire towards me, clothed, as has been said, in my sweet will, and they are full of grief through compassion for their neighbour, and because they afflict their own self-love, depriving it of sensual delights and consolations."

CHAPTER CII

How one should reprove one's neighbour, without falling into false judgement.

"Now listen, dearest daughter. In order that thou mightest understand better that which thou desiredst to know, I have spoken to thee of the general light, which you all must have, in whatever state you be, speaking of those who live in ordinary charity. And I have also spoken of those who are in the perfect light, which light I distinguished in two instances, first, that of those who, having left the world, applied themselves to the mortification of the body, and of those who in all things destroyed their own will; these latter were the perfect souls who nourish themselves at the table of holy desire. I will now speak particularly to thee, and in speaking to thee, and in satisfying thy desire, I shall also speak to others. I wish that thou shouldst do three things in particular, so that ignorance may not prevent the perfection to which I call thee. And I will tell thee the first thing I wish thee to do, in order that the devil, hidden in the cloak of love of the neighbour, may not nourish within thy soul the root of presumption, for by this means thou wouldest fall into false judgements, which I have forbidden thee, ordering thee to judge aright, whereas thou wouldest judge wrongly, returning to thy human point of view, for the devil would often cause thee to see what was true in order to lead thee into falsehood. This he would do in order to make thee judge the minds and intentions of my rational creatures, which fall, as I have told thee, under my judgement alone. This, then, is the first of the three things which I wish thee to do and observe, namely, that thou shouldst never deliver a judgement except under a certain condition, but under that condition I wish thee to do it. The condition is this, unless I have expressly manifested to thee in thy mind, not once nor twice, but several times, thy neighbour's fault, thou shouldest say nothing in particular to him who seems to

thee to fall into it, but rather in general correct the vices of those who come to visit thee, and plant the virtues lovingly and with benignity, but with a certain sternness in thy benignity, according as thou shalt see need. And if it should appear to thee that I have shown to thee many times the defects of others, unless thou seest that it was an express revelation from me, as has been said, thou shouldst say nothing in particular, but devote thyself to the surer way, so as to dispel the delusion and malice of the devil; for with the blade of this desire to judge he might wound thee, causing thee often to judge thy neighbour falsely, and thus, often to scandalise him.

"Wherefore let silence dwell in thy mouth, or holy conversation about virtue, and the contemptibleness of sin, and attribute that vice, which thou seemest to recognise in another, to thyself at the same time as to him, and if, in truth, this person should have fallen into that vice, he will correct himself better, seeing himself so sweetly treated, and will be obliged, by thy pleasant warnings, to correct himself, and will himself tell thee that very thing which thou wast on the point of saying to him; and thus thou wilt remain in safety, and wilt have cut away the road under the devil's feet, who will not be able to delude thee, or prevent the perfection of thy soul. I will too that thou shouldst know that thou shouldst not trust all thou seest, but rather cast it behind thee and refuse to look at it, looking only at thyself and recognising in thyself my bounty and my goodness. Thus do they, who have arrived at the last state, of which I spoke to thee; they constantly turn to the valley of self-knowledge, and do not, on that account, diminish the height of their union with me. And this is the first of the three things which, as I told thee, I wish thee to do, in order to serve me in truth."

CHAPTER CIII

How, if God should manifest to a person, praying for another, the mind of that other full of darkness, he should not be judged on that account to be in a state of sin.

"If at any time it should happen to thee, as in the case of which thou askest me the explanation, that thou shouldst be praying in particular for one of my creatures, and that during thy prayer thou shouldst see in him for whom thou prayest a ray of grace, and in another none at all, both persons being servants of mine, thou shouldst not judge him who appears to thee to have a confused and darkened mind to be in a state of grave sin, because often thy judgement would be false; and I wish thee to know that often, when praying for one and the same person, thou wilt sometimes see him full of light, and of a holy desire before me (in so good a state will he appear to thee, that thy soul will grow fat therewith, which is the effect of love, by which you all participate in each other's good); and sometimes thou wilt see the same person far away in mind from me, and filled with darkness and temptations, so that it will seem to thee a weariness to pray for him—to hold him before me. This happens sometimes through the defect of him for whom thou hast prayed, but more often, not through his defect, but because I, the Eternal God, have withdrawn myself from that soul, as I often do, to bring that soul to greater perfection, according to what I told thee when speaking of the states of the soul. I may have withdrawn, not my grace, but the feeling of it, its sweetness and consolation, deprived of which the mind remains barren, dry, and in grief, which grief I manifest to the soul who is praying, on account of the grace and love which I have to the soul who receives the fruit of the prayer, so that he who is praying may help him to disperse the clouds which are in his mind.

"See then, sweetest and dearest daughter, how ignorant and worthy of reprehension would be the judgement which

thou or another might make at the sight alone of this soul; thou wouldst judge that vice was there because I showed her to thee full of darkness, whereas thou seest that such a soul is not deprived of grace, but only of the feeling of my sweetness which I have given her. I wish, therefore thou and my other servants should also wish, that you should give yourselves up to perfect self-knowledge, so that you may perfectly recognise my goodness in you, and leave this and every other judgement to me, for judgement is mine and not yours.

"Abandon judgement, which is mine, and take up rather compassion, with hunger for my honour and salvation of souls. Preach virtue with yearning desire, and reprove vice in thyself and in others, as I have shown thee. In this way wilt thou come to me, in truth, and wilt show that thou hast kept in mind and observed the doctrine which was given thee by my Truth—namely, to make my will the subject of thy judgements, and not that of man.

"This must thou do if thou wilt possess virtue in all its purity, and wilt stand in the last and most perfect light, eating at the table of holy desire of the food of souls, to the glory and praise of my name."

CHAPTER CIV

How penance should not be taken for the foundation or principal end in itself: but rather the affection and love of virtue.

"I HAVE spoken to thee, dearest daughter, of two lights, and I will now speak to thee of the third, to which I would have thee pay great attention, reproving thyself, if at any time the devil, or thy own low point of view, should have tempted thee to wish to send all my servants along the same road as thyself, for this would be contrary to the doctrine given thee by my Truth. It may often happen that a person, seeing many travelling by the road of severe penance, would wish to send all by that road, and,

seeing that they do not all choose it, he is angered, and takes scandal, thinking that such are acting wrongly. Now see how such a one deceives himself, for it will often happen that he who is thought evil of because he does less penance, will do better and be more virtuous than he who, doing more penance, murmurs at it.

"Wherefore I said to thee above, that those who feed at the table of penance, unless they do so with true humility, their penance, not being to them an end in itself, but merely an instrument of virtue, will often, by this vice of murmuring, offend against their own perfection. They should therefore not remain in ignorance, but should see that perfection does not consist only in the maceration or slaying of the body, but in the destruction of their own perverse will. It is by this road of the extinguishing and submission of the human will to my sweet will, that I wish thee to desire all to walk. This is the doctrine of that glorious light, in which the soul runs as one enamoured, clothed with my Truth. I do not on that account despise penance, for it is good to macerate the body when it strives to fight against the spirit, but I do not wish, dearest daughter, that thou shouldst impose penance as a rule to any one, because all bodies are not equal, or of the same strong complexion; because one man may have a stronger nature than another, and also because it often happens, as I have told thee, that penance, when it has been begun, has to be relinquished, on account of many accidents which may occur. And, if the foundation of thy soul is laid in penance, or thou hadst caused others so to lay it, thou wouldst then faint and become imperfect, lacking consolation, for thou wouldst be deprived of the thing which thou didst love, and which had become thy principal object, and so thou wouldst seem to thyself to be deprived of me and of my goodness, and wouldst thus fall into weariness, bitterness and confusion. In this way thou wouldst lose the benefit of the spiritual exercise and the fervent prayer which thou wast wont to make when performing thy penance. Thus, having relinquished thy penance on account of some

accident or other, thou wouldst no longer find that savour in prayer which thou hadst before. This would happen because thy foundation would be laid rather in penance than in yearning desire—desire, that is, for true and real virtues.

"See, then, how much harm would follow from placing thy end solely in penance, how thou wouldst become ignorant, and fall into murmuring judgements against my servants, as has been said, and into weariness and great bitterness, endeavouring to serve, with finite works only, me, who am Infinite Good, and therefore demand on your part infinite desire; you should therefore place your foundation in the destruction and extinction of your own will, and by thus submitting your will to mine, you will send up before me a sweet, hungry and infinite desire, seeking my honour and the salvation of souls. And thus will you eat at the table of holy desire, which desire is never scandalised either in itself or in its neighbour, but rejoices in everything, and draws fruit from all the divers and varied circumstances in which I place the soul. The poor wretches who do not follow this sweet doctrine and smooth road given them by my Truth, do not so. They do, indeed, the contrary, judging according to their blindness and infirm vision. Wherefore they become raving lunatics, and deprive themselves both of the advantages of the world and of heaven. And in this life, as I have said to thee in another place, they taste the earnest of hell."

CHAPTER CV

A brief repetition of the above-mentioned things; with an addition concerning the reprehension of the neighbour.

"I HAVE now told thee, dearest daughter, and explained to thee, in satisfaction of thy desire, that which thou didst ask me—in what way, namely, thou shouldst judge thy neighbour, so as not to be deluded by the devil, or

by thy own low point of view; and I have told thee that thou shouldst reprove in general, and not in particular, unless thou shouldst have had an express revelation from me; and that in that case thou shouldst with humility blame thyself and thy neighbour at the same time. I have also told thee, and I repeat it, that in no case whatever is it lawful for thee to judge any creature, either in general, or in the particular case of one of my servants, as to whether he be well or badly disposed. And I have given the reason why thou canst not judge, and why, if thou didst do so, thou wouldst be deceived in thy judgement. I have also told thee, that you should all have compassion on each other and leave judgement to me; and I have given thee the doctrine, and the principal foundation for thee to give to those who should come to thee for counsel, and who should wish to come out of the darkness of mortal sin, and follow the path of virtue, and knowledge of themselves and of my goodness to them, and the destruction and extinction of their own will, so that it may rebel in nothing against me. And I have told thee to give them penance as a means and not as an end, and not to each one equally, but according to their capacity and condition; to one less, to another more, shalt thou give these external means. But, because I said to thee that it was not lawful for thee to reprove another, except in general (which is the truth), I do not wish thee to think that, when thou actually seest an open sin, thou canst not privately correct the sinner; this thou canst do, and if he is so obstinate that he will not correct himself, thou canst manifest his sin to two or three others; and if this does not succeed, thou mayest manifest it to the mystical body of the holy Church. What I have said to thee is—that thou canst not lawfully make to thyself any judgement in thy mind, whatever thou mayest appear to see with thine eyes, nor change thy opinions quickly, for, unless thou seest the truth of the matter by my express revelation, thou shouldst not make use of the truth, except in the way I have shown thee. This is the surer way of preventing the devil deluding thee under the cloak of neighbourly love.

I have now, dearest daughter, completed my explanations on this matter, which thou must preserve, and so increase the perfection of thy soul."

CHAPTER CVI

Of the means of knowing when visitations and mental visions come from God or the devil.

"I WILL now speak to thee of that which thou didst ask me, concerning the sign which I give the soul, that she may know whether the visitations which she receives, either by visions or other consolations, are from me or not. The sign, I told thee, was the joy which remained in the soul after the visitation, and the hunger for virtue, and specially the anointing of true humility, and the enflaming of the soul with divine charity. But since thou askedst me whether this joy may in any way deceive thee, in order that thou mayest attain to the surer proof, the sign, namely, of virtue which cannot be deceived, I will tell thee a delusion which may occur, by knowing which thou canst determine if the joy is in my Truth or not. Delusion may occur in this way. Thou must know that, when a rational creature posseses the object which she loves, and has longed to have, the more she loves the object, the less she sees it, and the less she endeavours prudently to examine it, so absorbed is she in the delight and consolation she has received from it. So do those who take great delight in mental consolations, and seek for visions, placing their end rather in the delight of these consolations than in me, like those of whom I spoke to thee who were still imperfect. Such as these may be deluded in their joy, besides other ways of delusion of which I spoke to thee distinctly in another place. How are they deluded? I will tell thee. Having conceived a great love of consolation, when they receive it either by vision or in some other way, they feel joy, for they see that they possess that which they loved and desired. Often, however, their consolation might come from the

devil, and they would feel that joy of which I spoke to thee, saying that when this visitation of the mind came from the devil, the mind was at first joyful, but afterwards remained in grief and an uneasy conscience, and empty of a desire for virtue. I now say to thee that the soul may often have that joy, and on account of it abandon prayer. If this joy exist without a burning desire for virtue, and be not anointed with humility, and on fire with my divine love, that visitation, or vision, or consolation, which that soul may have received, comes from the devil, and not from me, in spite of the sign of joy. But, inasmuch as the joy is not united with the desire for virtue, thou canst clearly see that it is drawn from the love which that soul had for her own mental consolation, wherefore she rejoices, seeing that she possesses that which she desired, it being the nature of love of every kind to feel joy in the possession of the beloved object. So that thou canst not trust in joy alone, even if the joy last all the time during which thou hast the consolation, and the more so that love, ignorant and walking imprudently through its very joy, cannot discern the wile of the devil; but if the soul walk prudently, she will examine whether or no her joy be united to love of virtue. In this way will she know whether the visitation which she has received comes from me or the devil. This is that sign of which I spoke to thee, with which I showed thee how thou couldst recognise if thy joy was a sign that thou hadst been visited by me, namely, if it were united with virtue, as I have truly told thee, for this sign proves to thee what is delusion and what is not; that is to say, it distinguishes between the joy which thou receivest from me in truth, and the joy which comes from thy spiritual self-love, from love, that is, of thy own consolation. The consolation which comes from me comes with joy and the love of virtue, and that which comes from the devil brings joy only, and when thou examinest thy soul thou art in the same condition of virtue as thou wert before, for this joy proceeds from love of one's own consolation, as has been said.

"But know that not everyone is deluded by this joy, but only those imperfect ones who seek for delight and consolation, and look rather to the gift than to me, the giver. Those, on the other hand, who in purity, and with regard for themselves, enflamed with love for me alone, who gives, and not for the gift, which they love for my sake, and not for their own consolation, cannot be deluded by this joy. They at once know by this sign when the devil has wanted, through his deceitfulness, to transform himself into an angel of light and manifest himself to their mind, namely that he arrives suddenly with great joy, but the joy soon passes away, and they find themselves left in darkness. They thus thoroughly recognise his deceitfulness by their prudence, because they are not passionately in love with (or desirous of) mental consolation. Then they humiliate themselves with true self-knowledge, despising all consolation, and embracing and holding fast the doctrine of my Truth. Then the devil, confused, wheels about, and never comes back again to them in that form. But those who are lovers of their own consolation will ofttimes receive the devil, but they will find out the deception in the way I told you, that is, in the feeling of the joy without the virtue, in that they will not find themselves issuing from the experience with humility, true charity, and hunger for my honour, who am Eternal God.

"And thus is my goodness manifested in that I have provided against the deception of the perfect ones and the imperfect ones, in whatever condition they be, because none of you can be deceived if you will preserve the light of the intellect that I have given you with the pupil of the most holy faith, and not let it be overshadowed by the devil, and veiled with self-love, 'because if you do not take it away from yourself, no one else will take it from you.'"

CHAPTER CVII

How God is the fulfiller of the holy desires of his servants; and how they please him much who ask and knock at the door of his truth with perseverance.

"Now I have told thee, dearest daughter, and fully explained to thee, illuminating the eye of thy intellect, about the deceptions the devil might practise upon thee, and I have satisfied thy desire in that which thou askest me, because I do not despise the desire of my servants. Also I not only give to all who ask, but I invite you all to ask, and he displeases me much who does not knock, in truth, at the door of the wisdom of my only-begotten Son, following his doctrine, the following of which doctrine is a knocking, calling to me, the Eternal Father, with the voice of holy desire, with humble and continual prayers. And I am that Father who gives you the bread of grace by means of this sweet door, my Truth; and sometimes, to test your desires and your perseverance, I pretend not to understand you, but I really understood you well, and give you that state of mind that you need, because I give you that hunger and the voice with which you cry to me, and I, seeing your constancy, fulfil your desires when they are ordered and directed to me. It was to such asking as this that my Truth invited you, when he said, '*Cry out and ye shall be answered, knock and it shall be opened to you, ask and it shall be given to you.*' And so I say to thee that I will that thou shouldst never relax the desire of asking for my help, neither lower thy voice from crying to me that I may have mercy on the world; nor cease from knocking at the door of my Truth, following in his footsteps, and delight thyself in the cross with him, eating the food of souls to the glory and praise of my name; and lament, with anxiety of heart, over the death of the human generation, that thou seest led to misery so great that thy tongue is not sufficient to relate it. On account of this lamenting and crying will I have mercy on the world, and it is this which I demand from

my servants, and which will be a sign to me that they love me in truth, and, as I told thee, I will not despise their desires."

CHAPTER CVIII

How this soul, rendering thanks to God, humiliates herself; then she prays for the whole world and particularly for the mystical body of the holy Church, and for her spiritual children, and for the two fathers of her soul; and after these things, she asks to hear something about the defects of the ministers of the holy Church.

THEN that soul, as if, in truth, inebriated, seemed beside herself, as if the feelings of the body were alienated through the union of love which she had made with her Creator, and as if, in elevation of mind, she had gazed into the eternal truth with the eye of her intellect, and, having recognised the truth, had become enamoured of it, and said, "O Supreme and Eternal Goodness of God, who am I, miserable one, that thou, Supreme and Eternal Father, hast manifested to me thy truth, and the hidden deceits of the devil, and the deceitfulness of personal feeling, so that I, and others in this life of pilgrimage, may know how to avoid being deceived by the devil or ourselves? What moved thee to do it? Love, because thou lovedst me without my having loved thee. O Fire of Love! Thanks, thanks be to thee, Eternal Father! I am imperfect and full of darkness, and thou, Perfection and Light, hast shown to me perfection, and the resplendent way of the doctrine of thy only-begotten Son. I was dead, and thou hast brought me to life. I was sick and thou hast given me medicine, and not only the medicine of the blood which thou gavest for the diseased human race in the person of thy Son, but also a medicine against a secret infirmity that I knew not of, in this precept, that in no way can I judge any rational creature, and particularly thy servants, upon whom ofttimes I, as one blind and sick with this infirmity, passed judgement under the pretext of thy honour and the salvation of

souls. Wherefore I thank thee, Supreme and Eternal Good, that in the manifesting of thy truth and the deceitfulness of the devil and our own passions, thou hast made me know my infirmity. Wherefore I beseech thee, through grace and mercy, that, from to-day henceforward I may never again wander from the path of thy doctrine, given by thy goodness to me and to whoever wishes to follow it, because without thee is nothing done. To thee then, Eternal Father, do I have recourse and flee, and I do not beseech thee for myself alone, Father, but for the whole world, and particularly for the mystical body of the holy Church, that this truth given to me, miserable one, by thee, Eternal Truth, may shine in thy ministers; and also I beseech thee especially for all those whom thou hast given me, and whom thou hast made one thing with me, and whom I love with a particular love, because they will be my refreshment to the glory and praise of thy name, when I see them running on this sweet and straight road, pure, and dead to their own will and opinion, and without any passing judgement on their neighbour, or causing him any scandal or murmuring. And I pray thee, Sweetest Love, that not one of them may be taken from me by the hand of the infernal devil, so that at last they may arrive at thee, their end, Eternal Father.

"Also I make another petition to thee for my two fathers, the supports whom thou hast placed on the earth to guard and instruct me, miserable infirm one, from the beginning of my conversion until now, that thou unite them, and of two bodies make one soul, and that they attend to nothing else than to complete in themselves, and in the mysteries that thou hast placed in their hands, the glory and praise of thy name, and the salvation of souls, and that I, an unworthy and miserable slave, and no daughter, may behave to them with due reverence and holy fear, for love of thee, in a way that will be to thine honour, and their peace and quiet, and to the edification of the neighbour. I now know for certain, Eternal Truth, that thou wilt not despise the desire of the petitions that

I have made to thee, because I know, from seeing what it has pleased thee to manifest, and still more from proof, that thou art the acceptor of holy desires. I, thy unworthy servant, will strive, according as thou wilt give me grace, to observe thy commandments and thy doctrine. Now, O Eternal Father, I remember a word which thou didst say to me in speaking of the ministers of the holy Church, to the effect that thou wouldst speak to me more distinctly in some other place of the sins which they commit to-day; wherefore if it should please thy goodness to tell me aught of this matter, I will gladly hear it, so as to have material for increasing my grief, compassion, and anxious desire for their salvation; for I remember that thou didst say that, on account of the endurance and tears, the grief and sweat and prayers of thy servants, thou wouldst reform the holy Church, and comfort her with good and holy pastors. I ask thee this in order that these sentiments may increase in me."

CHAPTER CIX

How God renders this soul attentive to prayer, replying to one of the above-mentioned petitions.

THEN the Eternal God, turning the eye of his mercy upon this soul, not despising her desire, but granting her requests, proceeded to satisfy the last petition, which she had made concerning his promise, saying, "O best beloved and dearest daughter, I will fulfil thy desire in this request, in order that, on thy side, thou mayest not sin through ignorance or negligence; for a fault of thine would be more serious and worthy of graver reproof now than before, because thou hast learnt more of my truth; wherefore apply thyself attentively to pray for all rational creatures, for the mystical body of the holy Church, and for those friends whom I have given thee, whom thou lovest with particular love, and be careful not to be negligent in giving them the benefit of thy prayers, and

the example of thy life, and the teaching of thy words, reproving vice and encouraging virtue according to thy power.

"Concerning the supports which I have given thee, of whom thou didst speak to me, know that thou art, in truth, a means by which they may each receive, according to their needs and fitness. And as I, thy Creator, grant thee the opportunity, for without me thou canst do nothing, I will fulfil thy desires; but do not thou fail, or they either, in your hope in me. My providence will never fail you, and every man, if he be humble, shall receive that which he is fit to receive; and every minister that which I have given him to administer, each in his own way, according to what he has received and will receive from my goodness."

CHAPTER CX

Of the dignity of the priest; and of the Sacrament of the Body of Christ; and of worthy and unworthy communicants.

"Now I will reply to that which thou didst ask me concerning the ministers of the holy Church, and in order that thou mayest the better understand the truth, open the eye of thy intellect, and look at their excellence and the dignity in which I have placed them. And since one thing is better known by means of contrast with its contrary, I will show thee the dignity of those who use virtuously the treasure I have placed in their hands; and in this way thou wilt the better see the misery of those who to-day are suckled at the breast of my Spouse." Then this soul obediently contemplated the truth, in which she saw virtue resplendent in those who truly taste it. Then said the Eternal God: "I will first, dearest daughter, speak to thee of the dignity of priests, having placed them where they are through my goodness, over and above the general love which I have had to my creatures, creating you in my image and similitude and recreating you all to the life of grace in the blood of my

only-begotten Son, whence you have arrived at such excellence, through the union which I made of my deity with human nature; so that in this you have greater dignity and excellence than the angels, for I took your human nature and not that of the angels. Wherefore, as I have said to you, I, God, have become man, and man has become God by the union of my divine nature with your human nature. This greatness is given in general to all rational creatures, but among these I have especially chosen my ministers for the sake of your salvation, so that through them the blood of the humble and immaculate Lamb, my only-begotten Son, may be administered to you. To them have I given the sun to administer, giving them the light of science and the heat of divine love, united together in the colour of the body and blood of my Son, whose body is a sun, because he is one thing with me, the True Sun, in such a way that he cannot be separated nor divided from me, as in the case of the natural sun, in which heat and light cannot be separated, so perfect is their union; for the sun, never leaving its orbit, lights the whole world and warms whoever wishes to be warmed by it, and is not defiled by any impurity on which it shines, for its light and heat and colour are united.

"So this Word, my Son, with his most sweet blood, is one sun, all God and all man, because he is one thing with me and I with him. My power is not separated from his wisdom, nor the fiery heat of the Holy Spirit from me, the Father, or from him, the Son; for he is one thing with us, the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, and we together forming one and the same sun; that is to say, I, the Eternal God, am that sun whence have proceeded the Son and the Holy Spirit. To the Holy Spirit is attributed fire and to the Son wisdom, by which wisdom my ministers receive the light of grace, so that they may administer this light to others, with gratitude for the benefits received from me, the Eternal Father, following the doctrine of the Eternal Wisdom, my only-begotten Son. This is that light, which has the

colour of your humanity, colour and light being closely united. Thus was the light of my divinity united to the colour of your humanity, which colour shone brightly when it became perfect through its union with the divine nature, and by this means of the Incarnate Word mixed with the light of my divine nature and the fiery heat of the Holy Spirit, have ye received the light. Whom have I entrusted with its administration?

"My ministers in the mystical body of the holy Church, so that you may have life, receiving his body in food and his blood in drink. I have said to thee that this body is, as it were, a sun. Wherefore, you cannot receive the body without the blood, or the blood or the body without the soul of the Incarnate Word; nor the soul nor the body without the divinity of me, the Eternal God, because none of these can be separated from each other, as I said to thee in another place that the divine nature never left the human nature, either by death or from any other cause. So that you receive the whole divine essence in that most sweet sacrament concealed under the whiteness of the bread; for as the sun cannot be divided into light, heat, and colour, the whole of God and the whole of man cannot be separated under the white mantle of the host; for even if the host should be divided into a million particles (if it were possible), in each particle should I be present, whole God and whole Man. When you break a mirror the reflection to be seen in it is not broken; similarly, when the host is divided God and man are not divided, but remain in each particle. Nor is the sacrament diminished in itself, except as far as may be in the following example.

"If thou hast a light, and the whole world should come to thee in order to take light from it, the light itself does not diminish, and yet each person has it all. It is true that everyone participates more or less in this light, according to the substance into which each one receives the fire. I will develop this metaphor further that thou mayest the better understand me. Suppose that there are many who bring their candles, one weighing an ounce, others two or six ounces, or a pound, or even more, and light them in

the flame, in each candle, whether large or small, is the whole light, that is to say, the heat, the colour, and the flame; nevertheless thou wouldst judge that he whose candle weighs an ounce has less of the light than he whose candle weighs a pound. Now the same thing happens to those who receive this sacrament. Each one carries his own candle, that is, the holy desire with which he receives this sacrament, which of itself is without light, and lights it by receiving this sacrament. I say without light, because of yourselves you can do nothing, though I have given you the material with which you can receive this light and feed it. The material is love, for through love I created you, and without love you cannot live.

"Your being, given to you through love, has received the right disposition in Holy Baptism, which you receive in virtue of the blood of the Word, for in no other way could you participate in this light; you would be like a candle with no wick inside it, which cannot burn or receive light, if you have not received in your souls the wick which catches this divine flame, that is to say, the holy faith, which you receive, by grace, in baptism, united with the disposition of your soul created by me, so fitted for love that, without love, which is her very food, she cannot live. Where does the soul united in this way obtain light? At the fire of my divine love, loving and fearing me, and following the doctrine of my Truth. It is true that the soul becomes more or less lighted according to the material which it brings to the fire; for although you all have one and the same material, in that you are all created to my image and similitude, and, being Christians, possess the light of Holy Baptism, each of you may grow in love and virtue by the help of my grace, as may please you. Not that you change the form of what I have given you, but that you increase your strength in love, and your free-will, by using it while you have time, for when time is past you can no longer do so. So that you can increase in love, as has been said, coming with love to receive this sweet and glorious light, which I have given you as food for your service, through my ministers,

and you receive this light according to the love and fiery desire with which you approach it.

"The light itself you receive entire, as I have said (in the example of those who, in spite of the difference in weight of their candles, all receive the entire light), and not divided, because it cannot be divided, as has been said, either on account of any imperfection of yours who receive, or of the minister; but you personally participate in this light, that is, in the grace which you receive in this sacrament, according to the holy desire with which you dispose yourselves to receive it. He who should go to this sweet sacrament in the guilt of mortal sin will receive no grace therefrom, though he actually receive the whole of God and the whole of man. Dost thou know the condition of the soul who receives unworthily? She is like a candle on which water has fallen, which can do nothing but crackle when brought near the flame, for no sooner has the fire touched it than it is extinguished, and nothing remains but smoke; so this soul has cast the water of guilt within her mind upon the candle which she received in Holy Baptism, which has drenched the wick of the grace of baptism, and, not having heated it at the fire of true contrition and confession, goes to the table of the altar to receive this light with her body, and not with her mind, wherefore the light, since the soul is not disposed as she should be for so great a mystery, does not remain by grace in that soul, but leaves her, and in the soul remains only greater confusion, for her light is extinguished and her sin increased by her darkness. Of the sacrament she feels nothing but the crackling of a remorseful conscience, not through the defect of the light itself, for that can receive no hurt, but on account of the water that was in the soul, which impeded her proper disposition so that she could not receive the light. See, therefore, that in no way can this light, united with its heat and its colour, be divided, either by the scanty desire of the soul when she receives the sacrament, or by any defect which may be in the soul, or by any defect of him who administers it, as I told thee of the sun, which is not

defiled by shining on anything foul, so the sweet light of this sacrament cannot be defiled, divided, or diminished in any way, nor can it be detached from its orbit.

"If all the world should receive in communion the light and heat of this Sun, the Word, my only-begotten Son, would not be separated from me—the True Sun, his Eternal Father—because in his mystical body, the holy Church, he is administered to whoever will receive him. He remains wholly with me, and yet you have him, whole God and whole man, as I told thee, in the metaphor of the light, that, if all the world came to take light from it, each would have it entire, and yet it would remain whole."

CHAPTER CXI

How the bodily sentiments are all deceived in the aforesaid sacrament, but not those of the soul, therefore it is with the latter that one must see, taste, and touch it; and of a beautiful vision this soul had upon this subject.

"O DEAREST daughter, open well the eye of thy intellect and gaze into the abyss of my love, for there is no rational creature whose heart would not melt for love in contemplating and considering, among the other benefits she receives from me, the special gift that she receives in the sacrament.

"And with what eye, dearest daughter, shouldst thou and others look at this mystery, and how shouldst thou touch it? Not only with the bodily sight and touch, because in this sacrament all bodily perceptions fail.

"The eye can only see, and the hand can only touch, the white substance of the bread, and the taste can only taste the savour of the bread, so that the grosser bodily sentiments are deceived; but the soul cannot be deceived in her sentiments unless she wish to be—that is, unless she let the light of the most holy faith be taken away from her by infidelity.

"How is this sacrament to be truly tasted, seen, and touched? With the sentiment of the soul. With what

eye is it to be seen? With the eye of the intellect if within it is the pupil of the most holy faith. This eye sees in that whiteness whole God and whole man, the divine nature united with the human nature, the body, the soul, and the blood of Christ, the soul united to the body, the body and the soul united with my divine nature, not detached from me, as I revealed to thee, if thou remember well, almost in the beginning of thy life; and not so much at first through the eye of thy intellect as through thy bodily eye, although the light being so great thy bodily eyes lost their vision, and only the sight of the eye of thy intellect remained. I showed it to thee for thine enlightenment in the battle that the devil had been waging against thee in this sacrament; and to make thee increase in love in the light of the most holy faith.

"Thou knowest that thou wentest one morning to church at sunrise to hear Mass, having beforehand been tormented by the devil, and thou placedst thyself upright at the Altar of the Crucifix, while the priest went to the Altar of Mary; thou stoodst there to consider thy sin, fearing to have offended me through the vexation which the devil had been causing thee, and to consider my love, which had made thee worthy to hear Mass, seeing that thou didst deem thyself unworthy to enter into my holy temple. When the minister came to consecrate, thou raisedst thine eyes above his head while he was saying the words of consecration, and I manifested myself to thee, and thou didst see issue from my breast a light, like a ray from the sun, which proceeds from the circle of the sun without being separated from it, out of the midst of which light came a dove and hovered over the host, in virtue of the words which the minister was saying. But sight remained alone in the eye of thy intellect, because thy bodily sight was not strong enough to stand the light, and in that place thou didst see and taste the abyss of the Trinity, whole God and whole man concealed and veiled in that whiteness that thou sawedst in the bread; and thou perceivedst that the seeing of the light and the presence of the Word, which thou sawedst intellectually

in the whiteness of the bread, did not prevent thee seeing at the same time the actual whiteness of the bread, the one vision did not prevent the other vision, that is to say, the sight of the God-Man revealed in the bread did not prevent the sight of the bread, for neither its whiteness, nor its touch, nor its savour were taken away. This was shown thee by my goodness, as I have said to thee. The eye of the intellect had the true vision, using the pupil of the holy faith, for this eye should be thy principal means of vision, inasmuch as it cannot be deceived; wherefore with it thou shouldst look on this sacrament. How dost thou touch it? By the hand of love. With this hand alone canst thou touch that which the eye of the intellect has recognised in this sacrament. The soul touches me with the hand of love, as if to certify to herself that which she has seen and known through faith. How dost thou taste it? With the palate of holy desire. The corporal palate tastes only the savour of the bread; but the palate of the soul, which is holy desire, tastes God and man. See, therefore, that the perceptions of the body are deluded, but not those of the soul, for she is illuminated and assured in her own perceptions, for she touches with the hand of love that which the eye of her intellect has seen with the pupil of holy faith; and with her palate—that is, with fiery desire—she tastes my burning charity, my ineffable love, with which I have made her worthy to receive the tremendous mystery of this sacrament and the grace which is contained therein. See, therefore, that thou shouldst receive and look on this sacrament, not only with bodily perceptions, but rather with thy spiritual perceptions, disposing thy soul in the way that has been said, to receive, and taste, and see this sacrament."

CHAPTER CXII

Of the excellent state of the soul who receives the sacrament in grace.

"SEE, dearest daughter, in what an excellent state is the soul who receives as she should this bread of life, this food of the angels. By receiving this sacrament she dwells in me and I in her, as the fish in the sea, and the sea in the fish—thus do I dwell in the soul, and the soul in me—the sea pacific. In that soul grace dwells, for, since she has received this bread of life in a state of grace, my grace remains in her, after the accidents of bread have been consumed. I leave you the imprint of grace, as does a seal, which, when lifted from the hot wax upon which it has been impressed, leaves behind its imprint, so the virtue of this sacrament remains in the soul, that is to say, the heat of my divine charity, and the clemency of the Holy Spirit. There also remains to you the wisdom of my only-begotten Son, by which the eye of your intellect has been illuminated to see and to know the doctrine of my truth, and, together with this wisdom, you participate in my strength and power, which strengthen the soul against her sensual self-love, against the devil, and against the world. Thou seest then that the imprint remains, when the seal has been taken away, that is, when the material accidents of the bread, having been consumed, this True Sun has returned to its centre, not that it was ever really separated from it, but constantly united to me. The abyss of my loving desire for your salvation has given you, through my dispensation and divine providence, coming to the help of your needs, the sweet truth as food in this life, where you are pilgrims and travellers, so that you may have refreshment, and not forget the benefit of the blood. See then how straitly you are constrained and obliged to render me love, because I love you so much, and, being the Supreme and Eternal Goodness, deserve your love."

CHAPTER CXIII

How the things which have been said about the excellence of this sacrament, have been said that we might know better the dignity of priests; and how God demands in them greater purity than in other creatures.

"I HAVE told thee all this, dearest daughter, that thou mayest the better recognise the dignity to which I have called my ministers, so that thy grief at their miseries may be more intense. If they themselves considered their own dignity they would not be in the darkness of mortal sin, or defile the face of their soul. They would not only see their offences against me, but also that, if they gave their bodies to be burned, they would not repay the tremendous grace and favour which they have received, inasmuch as no greater dignity exists in this life. They are my anointed ones, and I call them my Christs, because I have given them the office of administering me to you, and have placed them like fragrant flowers in the mystical body of the holy Church. The angel himself has no such dignity, for I have given it to those men whom I have chosen for my ministers, and whom I have appointed as earthly angels in this life. In all souls I demand purity and charity, that they should love me and their neighbour, helping him by the ministration of prayer, as I said to thee in another place. But far more do I demand purity in my ministers, and love towards me and towards their fellow-creatures, administering to them the body and blood of my only-begotten Son, with the fire of charity, and a hunger for the salvation of souls, for the glory and honour of my name. Even as these ministers require cleanness in the chalice in which this sacrifice is made, even so do I require the purity and cleanness of their heart and soul and mind. And I wish their body to be preserved, as the instrument of the soul in perfect charity; and I do not wish them to feed upon and wallow in the mire of filth, or to be inflated by pride, seeking great prelacies, or to be cruel to themselves or to their fellow-

creatures, because they cannot use cruelty to themselves without being cruel to their fellow-creatures; for if by sin they are cruel to themselves, they are cruel to the souls of their neighbours, in that they do not give them an example of life, nor care to draw them out of the hands of the devil, nor to administer to them the body and blood of my only-begotten Son, and me the True Light, as I told thee, and the other sacraments of the holy Church. So that, in being cruel to themselves, they are cruel to others."

CHAPTER CXIV[V]

How the sacraments should not be sold or bought, and how they who receive them should succour the ministers in temporal things, which the ministers should dispense in three divisions.

"I WISH my ministers to be liberal and not miserly, or, through cupidity and avarice, to sell the grace of the Holy Spirit. I do not desire this, and they ought not to do it; for even as they by gift and out of the broadness of my love have received of my goodness, so ought they, by gift and in broadness of heart, through affection of love for my honour and the salvation of souls, to give charitably to every rational creature who humbly asks for it; and they should take nothing as its price, because they have not bought it, but have received it freely from me to administer to you. But they can and should take alms, and you, who receive the sacraments, ought on your side, when you can, to give alms; for the ministers should be supported by you in temporal things, and succoured by you in their necessity, and you should be supported and fed by them in grace and spiritual gifts—that is, in the holy sacraments that I have placed in the holy Church for them to administer to you for your salvation. And I make known to you that, without any comparison, they give more to you than you to them, because comparison cannot be made between the transitory and finite things with which you help them, and me—God, who am infinite,

and whom through my divine providence and divine charity they have the right of administering to you. And not only is it so in this mystery, but also in any other spiritual graces which are administered to you by any creature, whether through prayer or through some other means. All your temporal substance would never equal, by any comparison, what you receive spiritually. Now I tell you that the substance which they receive from you they are bound to distribute in three ways—that is, to make of it three parts—one for their living, the other for the poor, and the other should be spent on the objects which are necessary for the services of the Church, and in no other way. Doing otherwise they offend me."

CHAPTER CXV

Of the dignity of priests; and how the virtue of the sacraments is not diminished by the faults either of the minister or of the recipient; and how God does not wish seculars to occupy themselves in correcting the clergy.

"THUS did the sweet and glorious ministers of whom I spoke to thee, when I wished thee to see their excellence, over and above the dignity which I had given them in making them my Christs, and who, exercising this dignity in virtue, are clothed in the light of the sweet and glorious sun, whom I gave into their hands to administer.

"Look at sweet Gregory and Sylvester, and others, their predecessors or successors who have followed the footsteps of my chief Pontiff, Peter, to whom I gave the keys of the heavenly kingdom of my truth, saying: '*Peter, I give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and what thou loosest on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and what thou bindest on earth shall be bound in heaven.*' Now that I have shown thee, dearest daughter, the excellence of their virtue, I will more fully prove to thee the dignity to which I have elected my ministers. They have the key of the blood of my only-begotten Son, which

unlocks the door of eternal life, which for a long time has remained locked through the sin of Adam.

"For that reason I gave you my Truth; that is to say, my Word—my only-begotten Son, who, enduring his passion and death, by his death destroyed yours, making you a bath of his blood. His blood and death, in virtue of the union between the divine and human natures, unlocked the door of eternal life. To whom did he leave the keys of his blood? To the glorious Apostle Peter, and to all his successors who are or shall be till the day of Judgement, all of them having the same authority which Peter had, which is not diminished by any defect of their own, nor is any defect caused thereby to the blood or to any of the sacraments, for, as I have already told thee, this sun does not become defiled by any impurity on which it shines, and does not lose its light amid the darkness of mortal sin, whether it be in the minister or in the recipient, such sin merely diminishing grace and increasing sin in the unworthy minister or recipient. Thus the Christ on earth holds the keys of the blood, as, if thou remember, I manifested to thee in this parable, showing thee what reverence seculars ought to have for my ministers, whether they be good or evil, and how much irreverence towards them displeases me. Thou rememberest that I represented the mystical body of the holy Church to thee under the form of a cellar, in which cellar was the blood of my only-begotten Son, which gives efficacy to all the sacraments. At the door of the cellar was the Christ on earth, who was charged with the administration of the blood, and with the choice of co-administrators who should help him to administer it throughout the whole body of Christian people. He who was accepted and anointed by him, became the minister of the blood, and no others. From him issues the whole order of clerks, each of whom is placed in his particular office to administer the glorious blood; and, as the Christ on earth has chosen them for his helpers, the right of correcting their defects belong to him alone, and so I wish it to be. For I have withdrawn them from service

and subjection to temporal masters, on account of the excellence and authority which I have given them. Civil law has nothing to do with their punishment; that right is placed in him whose office it is to govern under the divine law, for these are my anointed ones, and inasmuch as I have said in the Scripture: '*Do not touch my Christs*,' no greater ruin can come upon man than to constitute himself their punisher."

CHAPTER CXVI

How God considers persecutions directed against the holy Church or her ministers as directed against himself; and how this sin is graver than any other.

"If thou shouldst ask me how it is that the sin of persecution of the holy Church is graver than any other, and why it is that the sins of clerks should not diminish the reverence paid to them, I should reply, 'Because all reverence which is paid to them is not paid to them, but to me, in virtue of the blood which I have given them to administer.' For if it were not so, you would owe them no more reverence than to other men of the world; but, on account of their ministry, you are obliged to do them reverence, and come to them, not for their own sakes, but on account of the power which I have given them, if you wish to receive the sacraments of the holy Church; for should you neglect receiving them when you could you would die in a state of damnation. So the reverence paid to them is paid to me and to the glorious blood, it being one thing with me, by the union of the divine nature with the human. And as the reverence so is the irreverence, as to which I have said to thee that reverence should not be paid to them for their own sakes, but on account of the authority which I have given them; wherefore no man should offend them, because in offending them he offends me and not them, for I have forbidden it, and have said that I do not wish my Christs to be touched by their

hands. And on this account no one can excuse himself, saying: 'I do not rebel against the holy Church, but only against the sins of evil pastors.' Such a man, lifting his mind against his leader and blinded by self-love, does not see the truth, though indeed he really sees it well enough, but pretends not to, in order to deaden the sting of conscience. For he sees that, in truth, he is persecuting the blood, and not its servants. The insult is done to me, just as the reverence was my due. Wherefore every damage, insult, rudeness, contempt, and blame done to them is directed against me; that is to say, that I consider as done to me whatever is done to them, for I have said and repeat that I do not wish my Christs to be touched by them, it being my business to punish them, and not theirs. Such wicked men only prove their irreverence towards the blood, and that they do not hold dear the treasure which I have given them for the salvation and life of their souls. More I could not give them than the whole of God and the whole of man for their food, as I have said. But, inasmuch as they did not reverence me and my servants, they have diminished their dignity, and persecuted them, seeing in them many sins and defects, as in another place I will narrate to thee. If they had, in truth, reverenced me in them, they would not have risen against them for any personal defect, for no such defect can diminish the virtue of this sacrament. Wherefore they should not diminish their reverence, and doing so they offend me. This sin is graver than all others for many reasons, of which I will tell thee the three principal ones. One is that what they do to my servants they do to me; another is because in this way they disobey my commandment, since I have forbidden my servants to be touched, so they despise the virtue of the blood which they received in Holy Baptism, disobediently doing that which I have forbidden them, and become rebels against the blood, having lost their reverence for it, and rising against it with terrible persecutions. They are like putrid members cut off from the mystical body of the holy Church; wherefore, if they remain obstinate in this

rebellion and irreverence, dying in the same, they receive eternal damnation. It is true that, when they are at their last extremity, if they humble themselves and recognise their fault, and wish to reconcile themselves to their leader, even if they cannot actually do so, they receive mercy. They should not, however, put off the time of conversion, because they are not sure of having it. The third reason why their sin is graver than all others is because it is committed with deliberate malice, and because they know that they cannot act in such a way with a good conscience, and must offend me if they do so. Wherefore, their offence is a perverse pride without any corporal pleasure, though, on account of it, the body as well as the soul is consumed. The soul is consumed by the privation of grace, and gnawed by the worm of conscience; the temporal substance is consumed in the service of the devil, and their bodies die like those of the animals. So that this sin is committed directly against me, without any colour of their own pleasure or profit, but solely through malice and the smoke of pride, which pride is born of sensual self-love and of that perverse fear which Pilate had, when, for fear of losing his post, he slew Christ, my only-begotten Son. These men do the same. All other sins are committed through simplicity, or ignorance, or malice, in that the sinner knows the evil which he does, but on account of the disordinate delight, or some pleasure or profit which he finds in the sin, commits it, and committing it offends his own soul, and me, and his neighbour. Me he offends, because he does not pay glory and praise to my name; his neighbour, because he does not give him the light of love; but he does not personally attack me, but offends himself, which offence displeases me, on account of the loss which he incurs. But this sin is aimed directly at me without any medium. Other sins are committed with some sort of colour or excuse, and by means of someone else; for, as I have told thee, both sins and virtues are exercised by means of the neighbour; and, since sin deprives the sinner of me, and of his neighbour—for his neighbour is offended by the lack of love involved

in the sin—they offend me by these indirect means. But in this case they offend me directly, for among all my rational creatures I have chosen these my ministers, who are my anointed ones, as I have said to thee, ministers of the body and blood of my only-begotten Son, who, standing at the altar in the person of Christ, my Son, consecrate your human flesh with my divine nature.

"Their offence is therefore done to the Word, and being done to him is done to me, for he and I are one and the same. These poor wretches persecute the blood and deprive themselves of its fruit. This is why grave sin is committed against me, and not against my ministers, for I do not attribute to them either the honour or the persecution which they receive for my sake, for they are both directed to me, that is to say, to the glorious blood of my Son, who is one and the same with me. Wherefore I say to thee, that if all the other sins of these men were in one scale of the balance, and this one sin in the other, the scale containing their irreverence would outweigh the other, in the manner that has been said. I have manifested this to thee, so that thou mightest have greater matter of grief at the offence done to me and the damnation of these poor wretches, so that, through your grief and sorrow, and that of my other servants, the darkness that has come on these putrid members, cut off from the mystical body of the holy Church, should be dissolved by my goodness. But I find hardly any who grieve over the persecution directed against this glorious and precious blood; though I find many who shoot at me continually with the arrows of disordinate love and servile fear, and, blinded by their self-esteem, consider that to be an honour which is a disgrace; and that to be a disgrace which is in truth, an honour; that is to say, to humble themselves to their leader. On account of these sins they have risen against the blood to persecute it."

CHAPTER CXVII

Here God speaks against those who persecute the holy Church and his ministers, in various ways.

"I HAVE said that they persecute me, and it is true that they do so, as far as they can, in intention. But I personally can receive no hurt or be in any way injured by them, for I am like a stone which, if it be thrown, does not itself receive the blow, but returns against him who threw it. In this way the blows of their offences, which exhale a stench towards me, cannot really injure me, but their arrow returns to them poisoned with their guilt, which deprives them in this life of grace, and loses for them the fruit of the blood. And at last, if they have not corrected themselves with holy confession and contrition of heart, they arrive at eternal damnation, being cut off from me and being bound to the devil, with whom they have leagued together. For as soon as the soul is deprived of grace, she is bound to sin, with a bond of hatred against virtue and love of vice; with this bond they have placed themselves by their free will in the hands of the devil, and are bound to him, for in no other way could they be bound. With the same bond are the persecutors of the blood bound one to another, and bound to the devil as his members, having taken on themselves the function of devils. The devils strive to pervert my creatures and draw them from grace, and lead them into the guilt of mortal sin, in order to infect my creatures with the same evil which they have in themselves. Such men as these do the same, neither more nor less; for, like members of the devil, they go about subverting the sons of the spouse of Christ, my only-begotten Son, and loosening them from the bond of charity, binding them, when deprived of the fruit of the blood, with the miserable bond with which they themselves are bound. This bond is fastened with the knot of pride, and self-esteem, and servile fear; for it is through fear of losing their temporal possessions that they lose their grace, and fall into the

greatest confusion into which they can come, being deprived of the dignity of the blood. This bond is sealed with the seal of darkness; for they do not know into what miseries they have fallen themselves, and make others to fall. Wherefore, in their ignorance, they do not correct themselves, but, like blind men, take glory in the destruction of their soul and body. Let it grieve thee inestimably, dearest daughter, to see such blindness and misery in those who have been washed in the blood like thee, and nourished and brought up on the same blood, at the breast of the holy Church, and having become rebels through fear, and under colour of correcting the defects of my ministers, whom I have forbidden them to touch, have left their mother's breast. Thou and my other servants should be in terror when you hear this miserable bond spoken of. No tongue can tell how abominable it is to me, and it is the worse, because they wish to cloak and hide their own defects with the mantle of the defects of my ministers, and they do not consider that no such mantle can repair their sins to my eyes, which see everything. They might, indeed, well enough hide them from the eyes of my creatures, but not from me, from whom nothing can be hidden; for I loved you and knew you before you were in existence. And this is one of the reasons why the wretched men of the world do not correct themselves, because they do not really believe, with the light of a lively faith, that I see them. For if they really believed that I saw their sins, and that every sin would be punished, as every virtue rewarded, as I said to thee in another place, they would not do so much evil, but would correct themselves of that which they have done, and would humbly implore my mercy, and I would give it them through the blood of my Son. But they are obstinate and reprobated by my goodness for their sins, and fallen into the final ruin of privation of light, and have become blind persecutors of the blood, which persecution can find no excuse in any sin which may appear in the ministers of the blood."

CHAPTER CXVIII

A brief repetition of the above things, concerning the holy Church and her ministers.

"I HAVE told thee something, dearest daughter, of the reverence which should be paid to my anointed ones, in spite of their defects; such reverence being paid to them not on their own account, but because of the authority which I have given them. And inasmuch as the mystery of the sacrament cannot be diminished or divided by their sins, the reverence due to the treasure of the blood, and not to them personally, should not be diminished thereby.

"As for those who do the contrary, I have shown thee, to a small extent, how grave and displeasing to me is their irreverence and persecution of the blood, and I have shown thee the league which they have made against me, bound to the service of the devil, in order that thy grief might increase. This sin of which I have spoken to thee in detail is that of persecution of the holy Church, and of the Christian religion in general, by sinners who despise the blood, depriving themselves of the light of grace. This sin is serious, and displeases me, as I have narrated to thee in detail."

CHAPTER CXIX

Of the excellence, virtues, and holy works of virtuous and holy ministers; and how such are like the sun.

"I WILL now speak to thee, in order to give a little refreshment to thy soul, and to mitigate thy grief at the darkness of these miserable subjects, of the holy life of some of my ministers, of whom I have spoken to thee, who are like the sun, for the odour of their virtues mitigates the stench of the vices of the others, and the light thereof shines in their darkness. And by means of this light wilt thou the better be able to understand the darkness and sins of my unworthy ministers. Open then the eye of thy

intellect and gaze at the Sun of Justice, and thou wilt see those glorious ministers, who, through ministering the Sun, have become like to it, as I told thee of Peter, the prince of the Apostles, who received the keys of the kingdom of heaven. I say the same of these others, who have administered, in the garden of the holy Church, the Light, that is to say, the body and the blood of my only-begotten Son, who is himself the undivided Sun, as has been said, and all the sacraments of the holy Church, which all give life in virtue of the blood. Each one, placed in a different rank, has administered, according to his state, the grace of the Holy Spirit. With what have they administered it? With the light of grace, which they have drawn from this True Light. With light alone? No; because the light cannot be separated from the warmth and colour of grace, wherefore a man must either have the light, warmth, and colour of grace, or none at all. A man in mortal sin is deprived of the life of grace, and he who is in grace has illuminated the eye of his intellect to know me, who gave him both grace and the virtue which preserves it, and in that light he knows the misery and the reason of sin, that is to say, his own self-love, on which account he hates it, and thereby receives the warmth of divine love into his affection, which follows his intellect, and he receives the colour of this glorious Light, following the doctrine of my sweet Truth, by which his memory is filled with the benefit of the blood. Thou seest, therefore, that no one can receive the light without receiving the warmth and the colour, for they are united together and are one thing; wherefore he cannot, as I have said to thee, have one power of his soul so ordered as to receive me, the True Sun, unless all three powers of his soul are brought together and ordered in my name. For, as soon as the eye of the intellect lifts itself with the pupil of faith above sensual vision in the contemplation of me, affection follows it, loving that which the intellect sees and knows, and the memory is filled with that which the affection loves; and, as soon as these powers are thus disposed, the soul participates in me, the Sun who illuminates her with my power,

and with the wisdom of my only-begotten Son, and the fiery clemency of the Holy Spirit. See, then, that these have taken on them the condition of the Sun, for having clothed themselves, and filled the power of their soul with me, the true Sun, they become like me. The Sun illuminates them and causes the earth of their souls to germinate with its heat. Thus do my sweet ministers, elected and anointed and placed in the mystical body of the holy Church, in order to administer me, the Sun, that is to say, the body and blood of my only-begotten Son, together with the other sacraments, which draw their life from this blood; this they do in two ways, actually, in administering the sacraments, and spiritually, by shedding forth in the mystical body of the holy Church the light of supernatural science, together with the colour of an honourable and holy life, following the doctrine of my Truth, which they administer in the ardent love with which they cause barren souls to bear fruit, illuminating them with the light of their science, and driving away the darkness of their mortal sin and infidelity by the example of their holy and regular life, and reforming the lives of those who live in disorder and darkness of sin, and in coldness, through the privation of charity. So thou seest that they are the Sun, because they have taken the condition of the Sun from me, the True Sun, because, through affection of love, they are one thing with me, and I with them, as I narrated to thee in another place, and each one has given light in the holy Church, according to the position to which I have elected him: Peter with preaching and doctrine, and in the end with blood; Gregory with science, and holy scripture, and with the mirror of his life; Sylvester against the infidels, and with disputation and proving of the most holy faith, which he made in word and in deed, receiving virtue from me. If thou turnest to Augustine, and to the glorious Thomas and Jerome, and the others, thou wilt see how much light they have thrown over this spouse, extirpating error, like lamps placed upon the candelabra, with true and perfect humility. And as if famished for such food, they feed upon my honour, and the salvation of souls,

upon the table of the most holy cross. The martyrs, indeed, with blood, which blood cast up sweet perfume before my countenance; and with the perfume of the blood, and of the virtues, and with the light of science, they brought forth fruit in this spouse and extended the faith, and by their means the light of the most holy faith was rekindled in the darkened. And prelates, placed in the position of the prelacy of Christ on earth, offered me the sacrifice of justice with holy and upright lives. The pearl of justice, with true humility, and most ardent love, shone in them, and in their subjects, with the light of discretion. In them, principally because they justly paid me my due, in rendering glory and praise to my name, and to their own sensuality hatred and displeasure, despising vice and embracing virtue, with love of me and of their neighbour. With humility they trampled on pride, and with purity of heart and of body came, like angels, to the table of the altar, and with sincerity of mind celebrated, burning in the furnace of love. And because they first had done justice to themselves, they therefore did justice to those under them, wishing to see them live virtuously, and correcting them without any servile fear, because they were not thinking of themselves, but solely of my honour and the salvation of souls, like good shepherds, followers of the Good Shepherd, my Truth, whom I gave you to lead your sheep, having willed that he should give his life for you. These have followed his footsteps, and therefore did they correct them, and did not let their members become putrid for want of correcting, but they charitably corrected them with the unction of benignity, and with the sharpness of fire, cauterising the wound of sin with reproof and penance, little or much, according to the graveness of the fault. And in order to correct it and to speak the truth, they did not even fear death. They were true gardeners who, with care and holy tears, took away the thorns of mortal sins, and planted plants odoriferous of virtue. Wherefore those under them lived in holy, true fear, and grew up like sweet smelling flowers in the mystic body of the holy Church (because

they were not deprived of correction, and so were not guilty of sin), for my gardeners corrected them without any servile fear, being free from it, and without any sin, for they balanced exactly the scales of holy justice, reproving humbly and without human respect. And this justice was and is that pearl which shines in them, and which gave peace and light in the minds of the people, and caused holy fear to be with them, and unity of hearts. And I would that thou know that more darkness and division have come into the world amongst seculars and religious and the clergy and pastors of the holy Church through the lack of the light of justice and the advent of the darkness of injustice, than from any other causes.

"Neither the civil law nor the divine law can be kept in any degree without holy justice, because he who is not corrected, and does not correct others, becomes like a limb which putrefies and corrupts the whole body, because the bad physician, when it had already begun to corrupt, placed ointment immediately upon it, without having first burnt the wound. So were the prelate, or any other lord having subjects, on seeing one putrefying from the corruption of mortal sin, to apply to him the ointment of soft words of encouragement alone, without reproof, he would never cure him, but the putrefaction would rather spread to the other members, who with him form one body under the same pastor. But if he were a physician, good and true to those souls, as were those glorious pastors of old, he would not give salving ointment without the fire of reproof. And were the member still to remain obstinate in his evil doing, he would cut him off from the congregation, in order that he corrupt not the other members with the putrefaction of mortal sin. But they act not so to-day, but in cases of evil doing they even pretend not to see. And knowest thou wherefore? The root of self-love is alive in them, wherefore they bear perverted and servile fear. Because they fear to lose their position or their temporal goods, or their prelacy, they do not correct, but act like blind ones, in that they see not the real way by which their position is to be kept. If would they only see

that it is by holy justice they would be able to maintain it; but they do not, because they are deprived of light. But thinking to preserve their position with injustice, they do not reprove the faults of those under them; and they are deluded by their own sensitive self-love, or by their desire for lordship and prelacy, and they correct not the faults they should correct in others, because the same or greater ones are their own. They feel themselves comprehended in the guilt, and they therefore lose all ardour and security, and, fettered by servile fear, they make believe not to see. And moreover, if they do see they do not correct, but allow themselves to be bound over with flattering words and with many presents, and they themselves find the excuse for the guilty ones not to be punished. In such as these are fulfilled the words spoken by my Truth, saying: '*These are blind and leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch.*' My sweet ministers, of whom I spoke to thee, who have the properties and condition of the sun, did not, and do not (if there be any now) act so. And they are truly suns, as I have told thee, because in them is no darkness of sin or of ignorance, because they follow the doctrine of my Truth. They are not tepid, because they burn in the furnace of my love, and because they are despisers of the grandeurs, positions, and delights of the world. They fear not to correct, for he who does not desire lordship or prelacy will not fear to lose it, and will reprove manfully, and he whose conscience does not reprove him of guilt, does not fear.

"And therefore this pearl of justice was not dimmed in my anointed ones, my Christs (of whom I have narrated to thee), but was resplendent in them, wherefore they embraced voluntary poverty, and sought out vileness with profound humility, and cared not for scorn or villainies, or the detractions of men, or insult, or opprobrium, or pain, or torment.

"They were cursed, and they blessed, and with true patience they bore themselves like terrestrial angels, not by nature, but by their ministry, and the supernatural

grace given to them, of administering the body and blood of my only-begotten Son. And they are truly angels. Because, as the angel, which I give thee to be thy guardian, ministers to thee holy and good inspirations, so were these ministers angels, and were given by my goodness to be guardians, and therefore had they their eye continually over those under them, like real guardian angels, inspiring in their hearts holy and good thoughts, and offering up for them before me sweet and amorous desires with continual prayer, and the doctrine of words, and with example of life. So thou seest that they are angels, placed by my burning love, like lanterns in the mystic body of the holy Church, to be your guardians, so that ye blind ones may have guides to direct you into the way of truth, giving you good inspirations, with prayers and example of life and doctrine, as I said. With how much humility did they govern those under them, and converse with them! With how much hope and lively faith, and therefore with liberality, did they distribute to the poor the substance of the holy Church, not fearing, or caring if for them and their subjects temporal substance diminished. And they scarcely observed that which they were really bound to do, that is, to distribute the temporal substance to their own necessity, being the poor in the Church. They saved nothing, and after their death there remained no money at all, and there were some even who, for the sake of the poor, left the church in debt. This was because through the largeness of their charity, and of the hope that they had placed in my providence, they were without servile fear that aught should diminish to them, either spiritual or temporal.

"The sign that a creature hopes in me and not in himself, is that he does not fear with a servile fear. They who hope in themselves are the ones who fear, and are afraid of their own shadow, and doubt lest the sky and earth fade away before them. With such fears as these, and a perverted hope in their own small knowledge, they spend so much miserable solicitude in acquiring and preserving temporal things, that they turn their back on the spiritual,

caring not for them. But they, miserable, faithless, proud ones consider not that I alone am he who provides all things necessary for the soul and the body, and that with the same measure that my creatures hope in me, will my providence be measured to them. The miserable presumptuous ones do not regard the fact that I am he who is, and they are they who are not, and that they have received their being, and every other additional grace, from my goodness. And therefore his labour may be reputed to be in vain who watches the city, if it be not guarded by me. All his labour will be vain, if he thinks by his labour or solicitude to keep it, because I alone keep it. It is true that I desire you to use your being, and exercise the graces which I have bestowed upon you, in virtue using the free-will which I have given you, with the light of reason, because though I created you without your help I will not save you without it. I loved you before you were, and those my beloved ones saw and knew this, and therefore they loved me ineffably, and through their love hoped so greatly in me that they feared nothing. Sylvester feared not when he stood before the Emperor Constantine disputing with those twelve Jews before the whole crowd, but with lively faith he believed that I being for him, no one could be against him; and in the same way the others all lost their every fear, because they were not alone but were accompanied, because being in the enjoyment of love, they were in me, and from me they acquired the light of the wisdom of my only-begotten Son, and from me they received the faculty to be strong and powerful against the princes and tyrants of the world, and from me they had the fire of the Holy Spirit, sharing the clemency and burning love of that Spirit.

"This love was and is the companion of whomsoever desires it with the light of faith, with hope, with fortitude, true patience and long perseverance even until death. So thou seest that because they were not alone but were accompanied they fear nothing. He only who feels himself to be alone, and hopes in himself, deprived of the affection of love, fears, and is afraid of every little thing, because

he alone is without me who give supreme security to the soul who possesses me through the affection of love. And of this did those glorious ones, my beloved, have full experience, for nothing could injure their souls; but they on the contrary could injure men and the devils, who ofttimes remained bound by the virtue and power that I had given my servants over them. This was because I responded to the love, faith and hope they had placed in me. Thy tongue would not be sufficient to relate their virtues, neither the eye of thy intellect to see the fruit which they receive in everlasting life, and that all will receive who follow in their footsteps. They are like precious stones, and as such do they stand in my presence, because I have received their labour and poverty and the light which they shed with the odour of virtues in the mystic body of the holy Church. And in the life eternal I have placed them in the greatest dignity, and they receive blessing and glory in my sight, because they gave the example of an honourable and holy life, and with light administered the light of the body and blood of my only-begotten Son, and all the sacraments. And these my anointed ones and ministers are peculiarly beloved by me, on account of the dignity which I placed in them, and because this treasure which I placed in their hands they did not hide through negligence and ignorance, but rather recognised it to be from me, and exercised it with care and profound humility, with true and real virtues; and because I, for the salvation of souls, having placed them in so much excellency, they never rested like good shepherds from putting the sheep into the fold of the holy Church, and even out of love and hunger for souls they gave themselves to die, to get them out of the hands of the devil. They made themselves infirm with those who were infirm, so that they might not be overcome with despair, and to give them more courage in exposing their infirmity, they would ofttimes lend countenance to their infirmity and say, 'I too, am infirm with thee.' They wept with those who wept, and rejoiced with those who rejoiced; and thus sweetly they knew to give every one his nourish-

ment, preserving the good and rejoicing in their virtues, not being gnawed by envy, but expanded with the broadness of love for their neighbours, and those under them. They drew the imperfect ones out of imperfection, themselves becoming imperfect and infirm with them, as I told thee, with true and holy compassion, and correcting them and giving them penance for the sins they committed—they through love endured their penance together with them. For through love, they who gave the penance bore more pain than they who received it; and there were even those who actually performed the penance, and especially when they had seen that it had appeared particularly difficult to the penitent. Wherefore by that act the difficulty became changed into sweetness.

"O my beloved ones, they made themselves subjects, being prelates, they made themselves servants, being lords, they made themselves infirm, being whole, and without infirmity and the leprosy of mortal sin, being strong they made themselves weak, with the foolish and simple they showed themselves simple, and with the small insignificant. And so with love they knew how to be all things to all men, and to give to each one his nourishment. What caused them to do thus? The hunger and desire for my honour and the salvation of souls which they had conceived in me. They ran to feed on it at the table of the holy cross, not fleeing from or refusing any labour, but with zeal for souls and for the good of the holy Church and the spread of the faith, they put themselves in the midst of the thorns of tribulation, and exposed themselves to every peril with true patience, offering incense odoriferous with anxious desires, and humble and continual prayers. With tears and sweat they anointed the wounds of their neighbour, that is, the wounds of the guilt of mortal sin, which latter were perfectly cured, the ointment so made being received in humility."

CHAPTER CXX

A brief repetition of the preceding chapter; and of the reverence which should be paid to priests, whether they are good or bad.

"I HAVE shown thee, dearest daughter, a sample of the excellence of good priests (for what I have shown thee is only a sample of what that excellence really is), and I have told thee of the dignity in which I have placed them, having elected them for my ministers, on account of which dignity and authority I do not wish them to be punished by the hand of seculars on account of any personal defect, for those who punish them offend me miserably. But I wish seculars to hold them in due reverence, not for their own sakes, as I have said, but for mine, by reason of the authority which I have given them. Wherefore this reverence should never diminish in the case of priests whose virtue grows weak, any more than in the case of those virtuous ones of whose goodness I have spoken to thee; for all alike have been appointed ministers of the Sun—that is of the body and blood of my Son, and of the other sacraments.

"This dignity belongs to good and bad alike—all have the Sun to administer, as has been said, and perfect priests are themselves in a condition of light, that is to say, they illuminate and warm their neighbours through their love. And with this heat they cause virtues to spring up and bear fruit in the souls of their subjects. I have appointed them to be in very truth your guardian angels to protect you; to inspire your hearts with good thoughts by their holy prayers, and to teach you my doctrine reflected in the mirror of their life, and to serve you by administering to you the holy sacraments, thus serving you, watching over you, and inspiring you with good and holy thoughts as does an angel.

"See then, that besides the dignity to which I have appointed them, how worthy they are of being loved, when they also possess the adornment of virtue, as did those of whom I spoke to thee, which all are bound and

obliged to possess, and in what great reverence you should hold them, for they are my beloved children and shine each as a sun in the mystical body of the holy Church by their virtues, for every virtuous man is worthy of love, and these all the more by reason of the ministry which I have placed in their hands. You should love them therefore by reason of the virtue and dignity of the sacrament, and by reason of that very virtue and dignity you should hate the defects of those who live miserably in sin, but not on that account appoint yourselves their judges, which I forbid, because they are my Christs, and you ought to love and reverence the authority which I have given them. You know well that if a filthy and badly dressed person brought you a great treasure from which you obtained life, you would not hate the bearer, however ragged and filthy he might be, through love of the treasure and of the lord who sent it to you. His state would indeed displease you, and you would be anxious through love of his master that he should be cleansed from his foulness and properly clothed. This then, is your duty according to the demands of charity, and thus I wish you to act with regard to such badly ordered priests, who, themselves filthy and clothed in garments ragged with vice through their separation from my love, bring you great treasures—that is to say, the sacraments of the holy Church—from which you obtain the life of grace, receiving them worthily (in spite of the great defects there may be in them) through love of me, the Eternal God, who send them to you, and through love of that life of grace which you receive from the great treasure, by which they administer to you the whole of God and the whole of Man, that is to say, the body and blood of my Son united to my divine nature. Their sins indeed should displease you, and you should hate them, and strive with love and holy prayer to reclothe them, washing away their foulness with your tears—that is to say, that you should offer them before me with tears and great desire, that I may reclothe them in my goodness with the garment of charity. Know well that I wish to do them grace, if only they will dispose them-

selves to receive it, and you to pray for it; for it is not according to my will that they should administer to you the Sun being themselves in darkness, nor that they should be stripped of the garment of virtue, foully living in dishonour; on the contrary I have given them to you, and appointed them to be earthly angels and suns, as I have said. It not being my will that they should be in this state, ye should pray for them, and not judge them, leaving their judgement to me. And I, moved by your prayers, will do them mercy if they will only receive it, but if they do not correct their life, their dignity will be the cause of their ruin. For if they do not accept the breadth of my mercy, I, the Supreme Judge, shall terribly condemn them at their last extremity, and they will be sent to the eternal fire."

CHAPTER CXXI

Of the sins and evil life of wicked priests and ministers.

"NOW listen, dearest daughter, so that thou and my other servants may have more reason for offering to me your humble and continual prayers for them. I will show thee their iniquitous life; for in whatever direction thou mayest look among secular and religious priests, clerics, and prelates, small and great, young and old, and of every kind, thou wilt see nothing but offences against me and the stench of mortal sin, which they all exhale; which stench, indeed, hurts me not at all, but themselves grievously. Up to the present I have told thee of the excellence and virtue of my good ministers in order to refresh thy soul, and that thou mightest the better know the misery of these wretches, and see how grave is the reproof, and how intolerable the punishment of which they are worthy, even as my beloved and chosen priests, on account of having virtuously used the treasure given to them, are worthy of a greater reward than other men, and of being

placed as pearls in my sight. So contrariwise these wretches, who shall receive a terrible punishment.

"Dost thou perceive, dearest daughter, with grief and bitterness of heart, in what they have placed their principle and foundation?

"They have placed it in their own self-love, whence has grown the tree of pride and the offshoot of indiscretion; for indiscreetly do they seize honour and glory for themselves, seeking great prelacies and ornaments, and delicate treatment for their bodies. To me they render abuse and offence, attributing to themselves that which is not their own and to me that which is not mine. For to me should glory be given, and to my name the praise, and to themselves should they render hatred of their own sensuality with true self-knowledge, deeming themselves unworthy of so great a mystery as they have received from me. But these do the contrary, for, inflated with pride, they cannot satiate themselves with gnawing the earth of riches and worldly delights, becoming mean, greedy, and avaricious towards the poor, from which miserable pride and avarice, born of their own self-love, they have abandoned the care of souls. They only apply themselves to take care of temporal things and abandon my lambs, whom I have placed in their hands, like sheep without a shepherd, and do not feed them temporally or spiritually.

"Spiritually, indeed, they administer the sacraments of the holy Church, which sacraments cannot be taken away, or their virtue lost through their defect; but they do not feed you with hearty prayers, with hunger and desire for your salvation, together with a holy and honourable life. Nor do they feed their subjects with temporal things, that is to say, the poor with the substance of the Church, of which I said to thee that three parts should be made: one for the priests' necessities, another for the poor, and the third for the uses of the Church. These do the contrary, for not only do they not give to the poor the substance which they are obliged to give them, but they even rob their neighbour with simony and lust money, selling the grace of the Holy Spirit; for often are to be found some

of them so wicked as to refuse to give to him who is in need thereof the mystery which I have given them freely, and will only dispense it to those who fill their hands and persuade them with many gifts. They love their subjects for what they can get out of them, and nothing more. Their share of the Church they spend entirely on their own garments, loving to go delicately apparelled, not as clerks and religious, but as lords and courtiers. They take pains to have fine horses, and many vessels of gold and silver for the adornment of their dwellings, possessing that which cannot be ultimately retained, with much vanity of heart; and with this disordinate vanity their heart swells, and they place all their desire in food, making of their belly their god, eating and drinking without restraint, so that they promptly fall into an impure and lascivious life.

"Woe! woe to their wretched life! For they waste with harlots that which my only-begotten Son, the sweet Word, acquired with such pain on the wood of the holy Cross; they are devourers of souls bought with the blood of Christ, devouring them in their great misery in many and diverse ways, and with the substance of the poor do they feed their children. O temples of the devil, I have appointed you to be earthly angels in this life; and you are devils, for you have taken the work of devils. These devils give in return darkness, for what they have received from their flocks, and administering to them cruel torments, drag their souls away from grace, with persecutions and temptations, in order to reduce them to the guilt of mortal sin, striving to do what they can to this end; although no sin can occur unless the tempted soul herself wish it, yet they do what they can. So these wretches are not worthy of being called my ministers; they are incarnate devils, for by their sin have they conformed themselves to the will of the devil, and do his work, at the same time administering me, the True Son, in the darkness of mortal sin, casting the darkness of their disordinate and criminal life over their subjects and all other rational creatures. They cause confusion and pain

in the minds of creatures, who see them living in disorder; they are also the cause of confusion of conscience to those whom they often drag from the state of grace and the way of truth, and leading them to sin cause them to go by the way of lies. Not that he who thus follows them is on that account excused for his sin, for no one can be obliged to the guilt of mortal sin, either by invisible devils or by these visible ones; wherefore no one should look at their life or imitate what they do, but as my Truth admonished you in the holy Gospel you should rather do what they say—that is, you should follow the doctrine which is given you in the mystical body of the holy Church, by means of the preachers who go about as town-criers, proclaiming my Word in the holy Scripture. And as for the woes which these wretches deserve, and their evil life, do not imitate the latter or seek to inflict the former, for in doing so you will offend me; but leave them their evil life, and take my doctrine, leaving their punishment to me, for I am the sweet Eternal God who reward every virtue and punish every sin. They will not evade their punishment through the dignity of being my ministers, but on the contrary if they do not amend they will be more severely punished than all others, because they have received more than others. Their sin being so terrible they deserve the greater punishment. See therefore that they are in truth devils in the same way as my elect are earthly angels, inasmuch as they do angels' work."

CHAPTER CXXII

How injustice reigns in the above-mentioned wicked ministers; and that particularly in that they do not correct their subjects.

"I HAVE told thee how in my beloved ones there shone the pearl of justice. Now I will tell thee how these miserable wretches wear injustice on their breast as a buckle, which injustice both proceeds from, and is clasped with their own self-love, through which they commit injustice against

their own souls and against me, in the darkness of their indiscretion.

"Me they deprive of glory, and themselves of honour and a holy life, having neither desire for the salvation of souls nor hunger for virtue. For this reason they act unjustly towards their subjects and their neighbour, and do not correct their vices; rather they are blind and do not know them, and allow their subjects to sleep and lie quiet in their infirmities, from their disordinate fear of offending creatures. But they do not observe that in thus wishing to please creatures, they in reality displease them, and me, your Creator, as well. Sometimes indeed they do correct their neighbour, in order to cloak themselves in some rag of justice. But they do not go to a great man who is living in great and open sin, for they are afraid if they do that he will interfere with their own state and life, but they turn on some insignificant person, for they see that he can do them no harm. Thus is injustice committed through miserable self-love, which has poisoned the whole world, and the mystical body of the holy Church, and through which the garden of my spouse has run to seed and given birth to putrid flowers, which garden was properly cultivated at the time when the true labourers were there, that is to say, my holy ministers, and was adorned with many fragrant flowers, for the subjects led virtuous, honourable and holy lives, through the examples of their good pastors. To-day it is not so, but rather the contrary, for through wicked pastors the subjects have also become wicked. My spouse is full of the various thorns of many sins, not that she can in herself be infected through the stench of sin, for the virtue of the sacraments can receive no harm, but those who feed at the breast of this spouse are infected by the stench in their souls, losing the dignity in which I have placed them, though that dignity is not diminished in itself, but only with regard to them.

"Wherefore through their sins the blood is held of no account, for seculars lose the due reverence which they ought to pay to them for the blood's sake; not that they

ought to do so, and their fault, even if I forgive them, is none the less on account of the sins of their pastors, who are wretched mirrors of sin, in that office in which I have placed them in order to be mirrors of virtue."

CHAPTER CXXIII

Of many other defects of the said ministers; and in particular of their frequenting taverns and gambling and harlotry.

"WHENCE comes the stench that so infects their souls? From their own sensuality, which sensuality and self-love have they enthroned as the mistress of their soul, who has become sensuality's handmaid, whereas I had made her free with the blood of my Son. I speak of the general manumission when the whole human race was freed from the servitude and lordship of the devil. Every rational creature received this grace, but, over and above it, I set free my anointed ones from the servitude of the world, and appointed them to serve me, the eternal God, alone, and to administer the sacraments of the holy Church, and so free have I made them, that I do not wish any temporal lord to be their judge. Dost thou know, dearest daughter, how they repay me for so great a benefit? They repay me in this way by continually persecuting me with such diverse and terrible sins that thy tongue could not narrate, and thou wouldst faint at hearing them. Certain things, however, I will tell thee of them besides that which I have already said, in order to give thee matter for weeping and compassion. They ought to remain at the table of the cross with holy desire, feeding on the food of souls for my honour, and although every rational creature should do so, much more ought they whom I have chosen in order to administer to you the body and blood of Christ crucified, my only-begotten Son, and to give you the example, by their labours, of a good and holy life, and to feed on the food of your souls, following my Truth with great and holy desire. But they have chosen for their

table the public tavern, and there, openly cursing and perjuring themselves, full of many miserable sins, like men blinded and without the light of reason, have become animals through their sins, and live lasciviously in word and deed. They do not know if there be any divine office, and if sometimes they say it, they do so with their tongue only, their heart being far from me. They are also rogues and cheats, and having played for their soul, and lost it to the devil, they stake the goods of the Church, and the temporal substance which they receive by virtue of the blood, cheating and gambling it away. Wherefore the poor do not receive their due, and the Church remains unfurnished and deprived of the necessary ornaments; for these men, having become temples of the devil, take no further care of my temple. But those ornaments which they ought to place in the church out of reverence of the blood, they place in their own houses; and what is worse, they do this as bridegrooms adorning their spouses, for these incarnate demons adorn with church property their she-devils, with whom they live shamelessly in iniquity and impurity, sending them about or keeping them with them, at their own pleasure; so much so that these wretched demons, even when they are celebrating at the altar, are not the least disturbed if their wretched she-devil should come up with the rest of the people to make her offering, leading their children by the hand. O demons, and more than demons! if only your iniquities were more concealed from the eyes of your subjects, doing them in secret, you would indeed offend me and hurt yourselves, but at least you would not do the harm you now do to your neighbour, laying bare your criminal life before his eyes, so that your example gives him no reason to leave his own sins, but rather causes him to fall into similar ones and greater than you fall into yourselves. Is this the purity that I require from my minister, when he comes to celebrate at my altar? What purity is this that he brings, who rises in the morning with his mind defiled, and his body corrupted with impure mortal sin, and proceeds to celebrate? O tabernacle of the devil, where

are thy matins sung devoutly in solemn choir? Where is thy continual and holy prayer? Where are thy night watches, during which thou disposest thyself for the holy ministry which thou hast to perform in the morning, meditating on thy self-knowledge, and deeming thyself unworthy of so great a mystery, and on thy knowledge of me, who have made thee worthy, not through thy own merits, but have chosen thee to be my minister, through my goodness, so that thou mayest administer me to my other creatures?"

CHAPTER CXXIV

How among the said ministers reigns unnatural sin; and of a beautiful vision which this soul had on the subject.

"I WISH thee to know, dearest daughter, that I require in this sacrament from you and from them as great purity as it is possible for man to have in this life. On your side you ought to endeavour to acquire it continually. You should think that were it possible that the angelic nature should be purified, such purification would be necessary with regard to this mystery, but this is not possible, for angels need no purification, since the poison of sin cannot infect them. I say this to thee in order that thou mayest see how great a purity I require from you and from them in this sacrament, and particularly from them. But they act in a contrary way, for they come full of impurity to this mystery, and not only of that impurity to which, through the fragility of your weak nature, you are all naturally inclined (although reason, when free-will permits, can quiet the rebellion of nature), but these wretches not only do not bridle this fragility, but do worse, committing that accursed sin against nature, and as blind and fools, with the light of their intellect darkened, they do not know the stench and misery in which they are. It is not only that this sin stinks before me, who am the Supreme and Eternal Truth, it does indeed displease me so much and I hold it in such abomination that for it alone I

buried five cities by a divine judgement, my divine justice being no longer able to endure it. This sin not only displeases me as I have said, but also the devils whom these wretches have made their masters. Not that the evil displeases them because they like anything good, but because their nature was originally angelic, and their angelic nature causes them to loathe the sight of the actual commission of this enormous sin. They truly enough hurl the arrow poisoned with the venom of concupiscence, but when their victim proceeds to the actual commission of the sin, they depart for the reason and in the manner that I have said. Thou rememberest that I manifested to thee before the plague how displeasing this sin was to me, and how deeply the world was corrupted by it; so I lifted thee with holy desire and elevation of mind above thyself, and showed thee the whole world and, as it were, the nations thereof, and thou sawest this terrible sin and the devils fleeing as I have told thee, and thou rememberest that so great was the pain that thou didst receive, and the stench of this sin, that thou didst seem to thyself to see no refuge on this side of death, in which thou and my other servants could hide so as not to be attacked by this leprosy. Thou didst see that thou couldst not remain among men, for neither small nor great, nor old nor young, nor clerics nor religious, nor prelates, nor lords, nor subjects, were uncontaminated in body or mind by this curse.

"I showed thee this in general but not of individuals. If indeed there may be any of my servants preserved among the wicked from its infection on account of their virtue, I retain my just wrath and do not command the rocks to roll down on them, nor the earth to swallow them up, nor the animals to devour them, nor the devils to carry them off body and soul; on the contrary, I seek for ways and methods for doing them mercy, in order that they may correct their life. Wherefore I place in their midst my servants who are healthy and not leprous, so that they may pray to me for them. Sometimes I show them these miserable sins so that they may be more careful in seeking for the salvation of sinners, offering them to me

with greater compassion and sorrow for their defects and the offence done to me, interceding with me for them, as I did to thee in the way which thou knowest; and if thou rememberest well when I caused thee to feel a whiff of this stench, thou didst almost faint, and didst say to me, 'O Eternal Father! have mercy on me, and on thy creatures; either separate my soul from my body (for it does not seem to me that I can survive) or refresh me by showing me where I and thy other servants can repose, so that this leprosy may not destroy or injure the purity of our souls and bodies.'

"I replied to thee, turning towards thee with the eye of my kindness, and I repeat now—Let your repose, my daughter, be to render glory and praise to my name, and to offer before me the incense of continual prayer for these poor wretches who are in so miserable a state, having become worthy of the divine vengeance for their sins. Let your place of refuge be Christ crucified, my only-begotten Son; dwell and hide yourselves in the cavern of his side, where you will taste through love for his humanity my divine nature. In that open heart you will find love for me and for your neighbour, for it was for the honour of me, the Eternal Father, and to fulfil the obedience which I have laid on you for your salvation, that he ran to the shameful death of the holy cross. Seeing and tasting this love you will follow his doctrine, feeding at the table of the holy cross—that is, enduring through love and true patience your neighbour, and all labours, torments and pains from whatever quarter they come, and in this way you will flee and escape the leprosy. This was the method which I gave thee and others, but in spite of all this the feeling of the stench did not leave thy soul, nor the darkness the eye of thy intellect. But my providence provided for this, for at the moment when thou didst receive in communion the body and blood of my Son, wholly God and wholly man, the stench left thee on account of the fragrance, and the darkness left thee on account of the light which thou didst receive in this sacrament, and by an admirable effect of my goodness the

odour and taste of the blood remained for several days in thy mouth and palate, as thou knowest.

"See, therefore, dearest daughter, how abominable this sin is to me in every creature. Think, then, how much more so it is among those whom I have drawn out of the world and who live in a state of continence, among whom some have left the world to enter religion, and others are planted like flowers in the mystical body of the holy Church, among whom are my ministers. Thou couldst never understand how much more this sin displeases me in them than in men of the world and private persons practising continence, of whom I have spoken to you. For these as lights placed on the candlestick are the administrators of me, the True Sun, in the light of virtue and of their holy and honourable life, and yet they minister in darkness and are so darkened that they do not understand my holy Scripture, which itself is illuminated because written by my elect with the supernatural help of me, the True Light, as I explained to thee in another place. I say to thee that on account of their inflated pride and lasciviousness they see and understand nothing but the shell of the letter, and that they receive without any profit, because the taste of their soul is not rightly ordered, but rather corrupted with self-love and pride, and their reins are full of impurity; for they desire to fulfil their disordinate delights, committing their sins publicly and without shame; and in addition to all this, so full are they of greed and avarice that they also commit usury which I have forbidden. Miserable indeed will those be who commit it."

CHAPTER CXXV

How, through the above-mentioned defects, subjects do not receive correction; and of the defects of religious; and how, from these evils not being corrected, many others follow.

"How can these men full of such terrible sins do justice to, or reprove the sins of their subjects? They cannot, because their sins take from them the ardent zeal of holy

justice. And if on some occasion they should do so, their subjects, who are their companions in sin, can reply, 'Physician, first heal thyself, and then heal me; then I will take the medicine which thou givest me. This man is in a worse state than I am, and yet he blames me.' He does badly who reproves only with words and not with a good and well-ordered life. Not that he should not, whether he be good or evil in himself, reprove what is wrong in his subject, but he does wrong in not also correcting him with a holy and honourable example. And much worse does he who does not receive the reproof humbly, however it be given him, whether by a good or an evil pastor; he injures himself and no one else, for he alone will be punished for his own sins. All these evils, dearest daughter, arrive because my pastors do not correct their flocks with a good and holy example. Why do they not? Because they are blinded by self-love, in which are founded all their iniquities, and subjects, pastors, clerics and religious alike, think of nothing else than how they may accomplish their disordinate delights and pleasures. Alas! sweet daughter, where is the obedience of religious who have been placed in holy religion like angels, and are become worse than devils? I have placed them there to announce my word in doctrine and in truth, and they cry out with the sound of words alone, and so produce no fruit in the hearts of their hearers. Their preaching is made rather for the pleasure of men, and to tickle their ears, than to my honour. Wherefore, they do not make it their study to preach goodness of life, but rather to discourse with polished wit. Such as these do not truly sow my seed, because they take no pains to root out vices and plant virtues. For not having uprooted the thorns out of their own garden, they take no pains to do so out of their neighbour's. All their delight is in adorning their bodies and their cells, and in hurrying to and fro about the city. And the same thing happens to them as to a fish which dies when taken out of water. So die these religious who leave their cell, of which they should make a heaven, and wander with their useless and dishonour-

able life through the wards of the city, seeking out the houses of their relations, and of other seculars, according to the pleasure of their wretched subjects and wicked superiors who hold them in so loose a leash. And since these miserable pastors do not mind seeing their religious subject in the hands of she-devils, they often themselves give him up to them. And sometimes when they know that they are incarnate devils they will send them to the monasteries to those who are incarnate she-devils, and thus one ruins the other with many subtle devices and frauds. And the principle of their life the devil conceals under the cover of devotion, but the fruits of their devotions appear very soon. First are seen stinking flowers of dishonourable thoughts, and the leaves of corrupt words, and then they fulfil their miserable desires, and thou knowest well what fruits follow—namely, children. And often they carry it so far that both one and the other leave their religion, and become public rogues and harlots.

"All these and many other evils are caused by worthless superiors, who have not kept their eye on their subjects, but have rather let them go loose, and themselves pushed them into sin, and have made as if they did not see their miseries, or that their subject was wearied with his cell; and so through their double fault the subject dies. Thy tongue could not narrate with what terrible sins and in what miserable ways they offend me. They have become the arms of the devil, and with their stench they poison everything within, that is, in their monastery, and without among seculars. They are deprived of fraternal charity, and each one wishes to be the greater. Each one desires to possess something, acting contrary to obedience and the vow which they have taken. They have promised to observe the rule of their order, and they break it, and not only do they not observe the rule themselves, but they fall like hungry wolves upon the lambs who wish to observe it, mocking them and jeering at them. These wretches think to cover their own sins with the persecutions, mockery and insult that they deal out to good religious who observe the rule, but in doing so they expose themselves much more.

"To such a state have come the gardens of holy religious orders; for holy they are in themselves, having been founded by the Holy Spirit, and indeed the order in itself cannot be spoilt or corrupted through the sins of subject or superior. Wherefore he who wishes to enter a religious order should not be astonished at its evil members, but should continue on his way reposing in the arms of the order, which is not, and cannot become weak in itself, observing his rule to the day of his death. I have said to thee that the gardens of the holy religious orders have come to such a state, through evil directors and wicked subjects, that they do not keep or observe their rule in purity but break it, neither observing their customs or their ceremonies, which they rather ordain and observe for the pleasure of seculars wishing to please them in order to cloak their own sins.

"See therefore that they do not fulfil their first vow of obedience to observe their rule, of which obedience I will speak to thee in another place. They also take the vow of voluntary poverty and continence. How do they observe these? Marvel at the private possessions and sums of money which each one keeps in private, far from the universal love with which he should share his temporal and spiritual substance with his brethren, according to the commands of charity and of the rule of his order. But these men wish only to fatten themselves and their cattle (one beast feeding the other) while their poor brother dies of cold and hunger, so that their garments may be comfortably lined, and they may have good food. Do not think to find such a one at the poor table of the refectory; his delight is to be where he can fill himself with meat, and satisfy his greediness. He of course finds it impossible to observe the third vow of continence, for a full belly makes an unchaste mind; being heated and disordered he becomes lascivious, and so goes from bad to worse. Much harm also comes from the evil of their possessions, for if they had nothing to spend, they could not live in such disorder, and would not have these dangerous friendships, for not having the wherewithal to make presents, they

would not retain these friendships, which are based on the love of gifts or some delight or pleasure which the one person receives from the other, and not on perfect charity. O wretched ones, who have come to such misery through their sins, having been placed by me in such high dignity, they flee from the choir as if it were poison, and if they are there sing with their voice alone, their heart being far from me. As to the table of the altar, they have made it their habit to approach it without any proper dispositions, as if it were a table for corporal food. All these evils and many others of which I will not speak further to thee, so that thy ears may not itch, follow from the sinfulness of wicked pastors who do not correct or punish the sins of their subjects, and are not careful or zealous that the rule of their order should be observed, because they themselves do not observe it. They will even stone, for their great obedience, those who wish to observe the rule, punishing them for the faults which they have not committed. And all this they do, because the pearl of justice does not shine in them, but rather injustice. Wherefore they unjustly give to him who deserves grace and kindness, penance and hatred, and to those who are members of the devil like themselves they give love, pleasure, and position, placing in their hands the dignities of the order. Like blind men they live, and like blind men they distribute dignities, and govern their subjects. And if they do not correct themselves of this blindness, they eventually arrive at the darkness of eternal damnation, and have to give account to me, the supreme Judge, of the souls of their subjects. A bad account is all that they can render, and therefore they receive justly from me that which they have deserved."

CHAPTER CXXVI

How among these wicked ministers reigns the sin of lustfulness.

"I HAVE given thee, dearest daughter, a slight idea of the life of those who live in holy religion, I have shown thee how miserably they live in their order, clothed like sheep, but being in reality rapacious wolves. I now return to the clerics and ministers of the holy Church, to lament with thee over their sins, over and above what I have narrated to thee, founded on three columns of vice, Impurity, inflated Pride, and Cupidity, through which cupidity they sell the grace of the Holy Spirit. As I have already told thee, concerning these three vices, one depends on the other, and the foundation of these three columns is self-love. As long as these three columns stand erect, and do not fall to the earth by force of the love of virtue, they are sufficient to keep the mind firm and obstinate in every other vice, for as I have told thee, all the vices grow out of self-love, because from self-love is born the principal vice of pride, and a proud man is deprived of charity. And from pride he goes on to impurity and avarice, and so enchains himself with the devil's fetters. Now observe, dearest daughter, with what pride and filthiness they defile their minds and bodies, of which I have already told thee somewhat. But there is another thing that I would tell thee, in order that thou mayest know better the fountain of my mercy, and have greater compassion on these wretches when thou meetest them. Some of them are such devils that they not only do not reverence the sacrament, or hold dear the excellent state in which I have placed them by my goodness, but as if out of their minds with guilty love for some creature, being unable to obtain what they desire, will use devilish incantations, and will make enchantments with the very sacrament that is given you for the food of life, in order to fulfil their wretched and dishonourable thoughts, and make their will take effect. And those lambs whose souls and bodies they should feed so carefully they torment in such

ways as these and many others, which I will pass over in order not to give thee more pain; for as thou knowest, they cause them to lose their senses, their will being forced to do that which they do not wish, through the spell which this incarnate devil has cast over them; sometimes also their bodies suffer very gravely through the resistance which they make to themselves. What is the cause of this, and many other miserable evils, of which as thou knowest them I need not tell thee? Their dishonourable and wretched life. It is the flesh, dearest daughter, that flesh which is exalted above all the choirs of the angels in my divine nature united to your humanity, which these men give up to such misery. O abominable and wretched man, no man, but a brute beast, that thou givest thy flesh, anointed and consecrated to me, to harlots and worse. From thy flesh as from that of the whole human race was taken away the wound which Adam had made by his sin, on the wood of the most holy cross, by the wounded body of my only-begotten Son! O wretched man, he has done thee honour, and thou puttest him to shame. He has healed thy wounds with his blood, and has further made thee his minister, and thou persecutest him with lascivious and dishonourable sins. The Good Shepherd has washed his lambs in his blood, and thou defilest those who are pure, and doest all thou canst to cast them on to the dunghill. It is thy duty to be a mirror of honour, and thou art a mirror of shame. Thou hast directed all the members of thy body to work wickedness, and doest the contrary of that which my Truth did for thee. I endured that his eyes should be veiled, for thy better illumination, and with thy lascivious eyes thou aimest poisoned arrows at thy own soul, and the heart of those on whom thou gazest with such miserable passion.

"I endured that my Son should drink gall and vinegar, and thou, like a disordered animal, delightest thyself in delicate viands, making of thy belly thy god; the foolish language of dishonour dwells on thy tongue, with which thou art bound to counsel thy neighbour, to announce my word, and heartily recite the divine office. Yet I perceive

nothing but the stench of thy profanity, of thy constant blasphemy, for thou swearest and perjurest thyself like an auctioneer. I endured that my Son's hands should be bound, in order to set thee and the whole race of man free from the bonds of sin, and thy hands which have been anointed and consecrated, and administer the most holy sacrament, are hideously occupied in loathsome touches.

"All thy actions, of which thy hands are a true type, are directed to the service of the devil. O wretched man, and I have placed thee in such dignity to serve me only and every rational creature! I was willing that my Son's feet should be fastened to the cross, so as to make for thee a staircase of his body, and that his side should be opened that thou mightest see the secret of his heart, which I gave you as a hostelry always open that you might see and taste the ineffable love which I had for you, finding my divine nature there united to your humanity. See then that the blood of which thou art the minister has become a bath to cleanse your iniquities, and thou of thy heart hast made a devil's temple, and thy love, signified by thy feet, offers to me nothing but the stench of thy wickedness and thy insults, for the feet of thy affection conduct thy soul nowhere but into devil's houses. Thus with the whole of thy body thou persecutest the body of my Son, doing the contrary of what he did, and of what thou and all my creatures are bound to do. The instruments of thy body give out a false harmony, for the three powers of thy soul are assembled in the name of the devil, while it is thy duty to assemble them in my name. Thy memory, which should be full of the benefits which thou hast received from me, is filled with dishonour and many other evils. The eye of thy intellect, which thou shouldst fix with the light of faith on the object of Christ crucified, my only-begotten Son, whose minister thou art, is rather fixed on the vain and miserable delights, dignities, and riches of the world. Thy affection, which should love me alone without any medium, thou hast miserably placed in the love of creatures, and of thy own body, and even thy very

cattle thou lovest more than me. What proves this to me? Thy impatience towards me, when I take from thee something thou lovest much, and thy displeasure toward thy neighbour, for when thou thinkest to have received some temporal loss from him, hating him and cursing him, thou leavest my love and his. O unhappy man that thou art! Thou art the minister of the fire of my divine love, and for the sake of thy disordinate delights, and the trifling loss which may be caused thee by thy neighbour, thou losest it. This, dearest daughter, is one of those three miserable columns of which I spoke to thee."

CHAPTER CXXVII

How avarice reigns among the said ministers, who not only lend money with usury, but also sell and buy benefices and prelacies; and of the evils which have been brought about in holy Church by this cupidity.

"Now I will speak to thee of the second column, that is Avarice, through which what my Son gave with such boundless generosity is kept in narrow limits through greed. For thou seest his body all open on the wood of the cross, pouring forth blood from every part, and that he has not redeemed you with gold or silver, but with his blood, through the greatness of his love. Not a part only of the world, but the whole human race, past, present, and to come, was contained in the satisfaction of that sacrifice. And to none of you would the blood be administered, or the fire of divine love given, had he not first administered and given them. Which he did by virtue of my divine nature perfectly united to your humanity, and of this blood, so united to me by the greatness of my love, I have made thee, O wretched man, a minister. And so great are thy avarice and cupidity that that which my Son acquired on the cross, namely, the souls redeemed with such love, and that which my Son has given thee, in making thee a minister of the blood, thou, wretched man that thou art, hast confined in such narrow limits, that in thy avarice

thou puttest up the grace of the Holy Spirit to be sold, obliging thy subjects, when they beg it of thee, to buy from thee what thou hast received as a free gift. Thou hast not directed thy appetite to eat souls for my honour, but to devour money, and so closely hast thou fastened up that which thou hast received with such generosity that neither I nor thy neighbour receive anything from thee by free grace or love. The temporal substance which thou receivest for the sake of this blood, thou acceptest with great generosity, but, wretched miser that thou art, thou art kind only to thyself, and like a thief and a robber worthy of eternal death, thou dost embezzle the property of the poor and of holy Church, and dost spend it in luxurious delights with shameless men and women, and on thy relations and the education of thy children. O wretches, where are your real children, the sweet and royal virtues which you ought to have? Where is the fiery charity with which you should minister? Where is the yearning desire for my honour, and the salvation of souls? Where is the heart-breaking sorrow with which you should see the infernal wolf carrying off your lambs? You have none of these things, for in your narrow hearts there is no love for me, or for them. You only love yourselves with sensual self-love, with which you poison yourselves and others. You yourselves are the devils from hell, who swallow up souls with disordinate love; nothing else gives zest to your appetites. Wherefore it is no cause of trouble to you that the invisible devil should carry them off, you yourselves being visible devils, and the means by which they are sent to hell. You clothe and fatten yourselves, and the other devils with you, with the property of the church, and also your fine horses which you keep for your disordinate delight, and not for any real necessity, for which indeed you might justly keep them. These are the proper delights of men of the world, but your joys should consist in visiting the poor and sick, helping them in their spiritual and temporal needs; for this and nothing else have I made you my ministers and placed you in such dignity. But having become brute beasts yourselves, you

place your delight in other animals. If you could but see the torments which are prepared for you, if you do not amend, you would not do so; you would rather repent of what you have done in the past, and would reform your present conduct. See then, dearest daughter, what right I have to lament over these wretches, and how generously I have behaved to them, and how meanly they treat me. Is there anything more? Yes! As I have said to thee, there are some who lend money with usury; not that they put out an awning like public usurers, but in many subtle ways will they sell time to their neighbour in their cupidity, which thing is in no way lawful. If he should receive some small present in payment over and above the value of the service which he has rendered, in lending money to his neighbour (it being received as part of the value), this also is usury, and so would be everything else that he should receive in payment for waiting, as has been said. And I have appointed this wretched man to forbid seculars to do so, but he himself does the same and more also. How then should anyone go to him for counsel on this matter? when he is himself in like fault, and has lost the light of reason, on which account the counsel which he gives is darkened by the passion dwelling in his soul. These and many other sins are born in his narrow greedy heart; and the words said by my Truth when he entered the temple may be repeated here. He found men selling and buying, and, driving them out with a lash of cords, said: '*Of my Father's house, which is a house of prayer, ye have made a den of thieves.*' Thou seest well, sweetest daughter, that they who act thus do indeed turn my Church, which is a place of prayer, into a den of robbers. They bell and sell and make merchandise of the grace of the Holy Spirit. For thou seest that those who desire prelacies and benefices in the holy Church, buy them with many presents, offering whatever commodities or moneys they happen to possess. And the wretched sellers do not consider whether the buyer is good or evil, but out of complaisance and love of the gift which they have received, strive to place this putrid plant in the garden of the holy Church; and to this end

these wretches will give a good account of him to the Christ on earth, so that both of them use falseness and cheating towards the Christ on earth on a point on which they should approach him with the whole simple truth. But if the vicar of my Son should perceive their sins, he ought to punish them, and from the one take away his dignity if he do not amend his evil life; and as for the other who buys, it would be well that he should be sent to prison as his part of the bargain, so that he may be corrected for his sin, and that others may take warning and be afraid, so that no one else may imitate him. If the Christ on earth do this, he does his duty, and if he does not, his sin will not be unpunished when he has to give an account before me of his flock. Believe me, my daughter, to-day this is not done, and it is on this account that my Church has fallen into such sins and abominations. They do not seek to know, or try to investigate, the good or evil life of those to whom they give prelacies, and if they do seek at all to find out, they ask questions of those who are as bad as themselves, who give nothing but good testimony, because they themselves have similar defects, and think of nothing else except dignity of position, and gentility and riches and polished conversation. Worse than all, it will sometimes be alleged as a motive to the Consistory that the person in question is beautiful. What devilish doings! They should seek the ornament and beauty of virtue, and they rather look at the beauty of the body. They should seek poor and humble persons who avoid prelacies in their humility, and they choose those who seek them in vanity and inflated pride. They admire knowledge. Knowledge in itself is good and perfect when a learned person is also good, honourable, and humble in life. But if knowledge be joined with a proud, dishonourable, and wicked life it is a poison, and the holy Scripture does not mean otherwise in its spiritual sense. To one in darkness it seems to me so, because he has lost the light of reason and has obscured the eye of his intellect, with which supernatural light the holy Scripture was originally written, and should be understood, as I said to thee, more

clearly in another place. See then that science, good in itself, is not so in him who does not use it aright; it rather lights for him a penal fire if he will not amend his life. They should therefore rather seek out men of good and holy life than learned men who live evilly, but they do the contrary. Those who, besides being good and virtuous, are great in learning, they despise as fools, and the poor they avoid, because they have nothing wherewith to pay them. See, therefore, that in my house, which ought to be a house of prayer, and where the pearl of justice ought to shine, together with the light of learning, honour, and holiness, and the odour of truth, lies abound.

"These men should practise voluntary poverty, and watch over souls with true solicitude, snatching them from the hands of devils; but they, on the contrary, seek for riches and take such care of temporal things that they have altogether abandoned spiritual things, and pay no attention to anything but gambling and laughter and the increase of their temporal substance. The wretched fools do not perceive that this is the way to lose it, whereas if they abounded in virtue, and applied themselves to the care of spiritual matters as they ought to do, they would abound in temporalities. And my spouse has had many rebellions to suffer on account of temporalities, which she ought not to have had. My servants should leave the dead to bury the dead, and follow the doctrine of my Truth, and carry out in themselves my will; that is to say, they should perform the duty I have given them, whereas these men do the contrary, for they bury these dead and transitory things with disordinate affection and solicitude, taking from men of the world their proper occupation. This is displeasing to me and hurtful to holy Church; to worldly men, therefore, they should leave these things, and let one corpse bury the other—that is to say, let those whose duty it is take charge of temporal things.

"Why did I say, let the dead bury the dead? The word dead should here be understood in two ways: in one way, when he who administers temporal things does so in the guilt of mortal sin, by the disordinate affection and

care which he has for them. The administration of temporal affairs may also be called dead, because it belongs to the body, which is a dead thing, having no life in itself except in so far as it participates in the life of the soul while the latter is with the body, and no more. My anointed ones, therefore, who ought to live like angels, should leave these dead things to the dead, and should themselves govern souls who are living, and never die as regards their essence, administering to them the sacraments and gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and feeding them with the spiritual food of a good and holy example. In this way my house would be indeed a house of prayer, abounding in their graces and virtues. But since they do not act thus, but the contrary, I can truly say that my house has become a den of thieves, for they have become merchants with their avaricious bargaining; and my Church has also become a cattle shed, for they live in their dishonour like brute beasts. They have made my church into a stable, and lie there in the filth of their impurity, for they keep their she-devils in the church as a bridegroom his spouse in his own house. See, then, how much evil (and there is much more beyond comparison with what I have told thee) grows from these two fetid and stinking columns—impurity and cupidity."

CHAPTER CXXVIII

How pride reigns among these ministers, by which they lose their knowledge; and how, having lost their knowledge, they fall into the sin of seeming to consecrate, while they do not really do so.

"I WILL now speak to thee of the third column—that of pride—which I have placed last, for it is both last and first, for all the vices are flavoured with pride, as the virtues all receive life from charity. Pride is born and nourished from sensual self-love, of which I said to thee that it was the foundation of these three columns, and of all the evils which are committed by creatures, for he who loves himself with disordinate love, is deprived of my love,

and not loving me he offends me, because he does not observe the commandment of the law, which is to love me above everything, and one's neighbour as oneself. This is the reason why those who love themselves with a sensual love neither serve nor love me, but the world; for neither sensual love nor the world have conformity with me. There being no conformity between me and the world, it must needs be that he who loves and serves the world with sensual love, should hate me; while he who loves me truly hates the world. For this reason my Truth said: '*No one can serve two masters, for if he serve the one, he will not content the other.*' See then how self-love deprives the soul of my love, and clothes it with the vice of pride, whence through the principle of self-love is borne every kind of sin. I grieve over this in all my rational creatures, but particularly in my anointed ones, who ought to be humble, not only because everyone should possess the virtue of humility, which nourishes charity, but also because they have become the ministers of the humble and immaculate Lamb, my only-begotten Son. Are they not ashamed, and for that matter should not the whole human race be ashamed, when they see me, God, humbled to man, giving you the Word, my Son, in your own flesh? They see my Word eagerly humbling himself to the shameful death of the cross, in obedience to my commands. His head is bent to salute you, his crown is for your adornment, his arms are open to embrace you, his feet are nailed, so that he may never leave you, and thou, O wretched man, who art the minister of this generosity and humility, shouldst embrace the cross; but thou fliest it, and embracest instead impure women. Thou shouldst stand firm and stable, following the doctrine of my Word, nailing thy heart and mind to him, and thou swayest about for every cause like a leaf before the wind; if the wind be prosperous thou movest with disordinate joy, and if it be adverse thou movest with impatience, thus drawing forth the marrow of pride, which is impatience, for whereas the marrow of charity is patience, the marrow of pride is impatience, wherefore proud and angry people are

disturbed and scandalised at everything. Pride is so displeasing to me, that it fell from heaven when an angel became proud; pride did not rise in heaven, but fell to the depths of hell, wherefore my Truth said 'that he who should exalt himself (that is, by pride) should be humbled, and that he who humbled himself should be exalted.' In all people pride is displeasing to me, but more so in my ministers, as I have said to thee, for I have placed them in a humble position to administer the humble lamb; while they do just the contrary. How is such a wretched priest not ashamed to be proud, when he sees me humble to you, giving you my Word, my only-begotten Son, to be humbled, through obedience to me, to the shameful death of the Cross, of which Word he has been made the minister. My Son bows his head, and this wretch lifts his head against me and his neighbour, and from the humble lamb that he should be, he has become a ram with the horns of pride, butting against everyone he meets. O unhappy man, thou dost not reflect, thou canst not escape me. Is this, then, the duty that I have laid upon thee, to butt against me with the horn of thy pride, injuring me and thy neighbour, turning against him with ignorant injuries? Is this the mildness with which thou shouldst celebrate the body and blood of Christ, my Son? Thou hast become as it were a wild animal without fear of me. Thou devourest thy neighbour and livest in quarrels and hast become an acceptor of creatures, accepting those who serve thee and are useful to thee, or others who please thee, because their life is the same as thine, whom on the contrary thou shouldst correct, despising their sins, but thou rather givest them the example of doing what they do and worse also. If thou wert good, thou wouldst correct them, but inasmuch as thou art evil, thy neighbour's defects do not displease thee, and thou lettest him be; it is the humble and virtuous poor whom thou despisest. Thou fleest them and reasonably, though indeed thou shouldst not do so; thou avoidest them because the stench of thy vice cannot endure the odour of their virtue; thou deemest thyself insulted if thou seest my poor ones at thy

door; thou eludest their need of thy visitation, seeing them die of hunger rather than help them. And all this is caused by the horns of pride which will not bend themselves to a little humility. Why will they not bend? Because thou hast in no way cast from thyself self-love which nourishes pride, and therefore wilt not condescend to administer to the poor either thy temporal or spiritual substance without receiving something in return. O cursed pride, based on self-love, how hast thou blinded the eye of their intellect, that while they seem to love themselves and be tender to themselves, they are in truth cruel, that while they seem to gain, they are losing, and while they seem to enjoy delights and riches and great dignities, they are really in the greatest poverty and misery, for they are deprived of the riches of virtue and have fallen from the heights of grace into the depths of mortal sin. They seem to see, but are blind, for they know neither themselves nor me. They do not know their own condition nor the dignity in which I have placed them, nor the fragility of the world, for if they did they would not make gods of themselves. What has deprived them of knowledge? Pride—and they have thus become devils, having been chosen by me to be earthly angels in this life. And they fall from the height of heaven into the depths of darkness, and their darkness and iniquity are multiplied to such an extent that they sometimes fall into a sin of which I will speak to thee. Some of them are such incarnate devils that they often appear to consecrate, when they do not in reality, through fear of my judgement, and to free themselves from any bridle and fear of sin. Such a man rises in the morning from impurity, having passed the preceding evening in disordinate banqueting; he is obliged to satisfy the people, and considering his own iniquities, sees that he cannot celebrate with a good conscience; wherefore he fears my judgement, not through hatred of vice, but through self-love. See, dearest daughter, how blind he is; he does not have recourse to contrition, with hatred of sin and a firm purpose of amendment; he takes the alternative remedy of not consecrating.

And the blind man does not see that his error and sin is greater than before, for he makes the congregation commit idolatry, causing them to adore an unconsecrated host, as if it were the body and blood of Christ, my only-begotten Son, wholly God and wholly man. No; the host is indeed this when it is consecrated, but otherwise it is only bread.

"See, now, how great is this abomination, and how great the patience with which I endure it. But if they do not correct themselves, every grace of their state will turn to their perdition. What should the congregation do in order not to fall into such a snare? They should pray under condition in this wise: 'If this minister has said that which he ought to say, I truly believe that thou art Christ the Son of the living God, given to me as food by the fire of thine inestimable charity; and in memory of thy most sweet passion, and the great benefit of the blood which thou didst shed with such fire of love to wash away our iniquities.' By this means the blindness of the priest will not bring them into darkness, causing them to adore one thing for another; the guilt will attach to the miserable minister alone, the congregation will only commit a material mistake. O sweetest daughter, what prevents the earth from swallowing them up? What prevents my power from turning them into immovable statues before all the people for their greater confusion? My mercy. And I restrain myself—that is to say, I conquer and restrain my divine justice by the force of my mercy. But these obstinate devils neither know nor see my mercy, but being blinded by pride think that their office is given them of their due, whereas in reality they have it only by my free grace."

CHAPTER CXXIX

Of many other sins which are committed through pride and self-love.

"I HAVE told thee all this in order to give the more matter for bitter grief and weeping over their blindness in that they remain in a state of damnation, and that thou mayest the better know my mercy to place by faith the greatest security in it, offering them, that is, the ministers of the holy Church and all the world, before me, praying to me to have mercy upon them. And the more thou offerest to me for them sorrowful and amorous desires, the more wilt thou show the love which thou hast for me. Because that service which neither thou nor my other servants can fulfil to me you must do and show by means of them, and then will I let myself be constrained by the desire, prayers, and tears of my servants; and I will have mercy on my spouse, reforming her with good and holy pastors. The good pastors will reform her, correcting by force those under them, because nearly all the evils which are done by the subjects are the fault of bad pastors, because had they corrected, and had the pearl of justice shone in them with an honourable and holy life, those evils would not have been. And dost thou know what results come from these perverse methods? It is because the one followed in the footsteps of the other that the subjects are not obedient, because when the prelate was subject he was not obedient to his prelate; wherefore, he receives from his subject that which he rendered, and because he was a bad subject he is a bad pastor.

"Pride founded in self-love is the cause of this and of every other sin.

"Ignorant and proud as he was when he was a subject, he is more so now that he is a prelate. And his ignorance is so great that, as if he were blind, he will give the office of priest to a man so unlearned that he can scarcely read and does not know his office; and ofttimes, through his ignorance, not knowing well the sacramental words, he

will not consecrate, and in this way he commits the same sin of not consecrating that those committed who, through malice, pretended to consecrate without doing so. They ought to choose men experienced and founded in virtue, who know and understand what they say; but they do quite the contrary, and do not seek them for their knowledge and experience, but for the affection they bear them, and it appears that they select children and not mature men. And they do not aim at having men of honourable and holy life who recognise the dignity to which they are called and the great mystery that they have to celebrate, but they aim solely at multiplying persons, but without regard to virtue.

"They are blind and gatherers together of the blind, and they see not that I shall require from them an account for this, and for the other things in the last extremity of death, and they will see that after they have thus made the priests dark, and given to them the care of souls that they knew not how to take care of themselves.

"For how could such as these who do not recognise their own sin, correct and recognise it in others? They could not and would not act against themselves. And the sheep who have not a shepherd who cares for them easily stray and are ofttimes torn in pieces and devoured by wolves. And because the shepherd is a bad one he takes no care to keep a dog who barks when he sees the wolf coming, but he keeps such a one as he is himself. And so these ministers and pastors, having no solicitude, and not holding in their hand the stick of justice wherewith to correct the dog of conscience, he does not bark, and so they do not with care reprove themselves, and do not endeavour to bring back to the way of truth and justice those sheep who have strayed from it in not observing my commandments, and so prevent them from being devoured by the infernal wolf. Did this dog bark, and were their sins laid upon them with the rod of holy justice, their sheep would be delivered and would return to the fold. But because he is a shepherd without a rod, and without the dog of conscience, the sheep perish, and he does not

trouble himself, because the dog of his conscience is enfeebled, and therefore does not bark, because he has not been given any food.

"The food that should be given to this dog is the food of the Lamb, my Son, because in so far as the memory, as the vessel of the soul, is full of the blood, so does the conscience feed on it, that is to say, that through the memory of the blood the soul is inflamed with hatred of vice and the love of virtue, the which hatred and love purify the soul from the stain of mortal sin, and give so much vigour to the conscience that it watches over the soul so that if any enemy—that is to say sin—should wish to enter, not only the affection but even the mind, like a watch-dog, warns with its prick at the dictation of reason, and on this account the man does not commit the sin, for he who possesses conscience possesses justice. But such wicked men as these, not worthy to be called my ministers or even rational creatures, having become animals through their sins, are without a watch-dog through their weakness, and are also without the rod of holy justice, having been made so timid by their sins that a mere shadow frightens them, not with holy but with servile fear. They ought to be ready to die in order to snatch souls from the hand of the devil, but on the contrary they place them there themselves, depriving them of the doctrine of a good and holy life, and being unable to endure an unkind word for their salvation. Often the soul of a subject will be entangled in very grave sins, and he will have to make satisfaction to his neighbour, and in order not to deprive his family through the disordinate love which he bears to them, he will not pay his debt; his life will be known to a great number of people and also to his wretched priest, who will have been particularly informed, so that, like the physician which he should be, he may heal that soul. The wretched minister will go to do his duty, and for one rough word said to him, or for one evil glance directed at him, he will be afraid to have anything more to do with the affair. And sometimes a present will be made to him, so that between the bribe and his servile fear he will leave

that soul in the hands of the devils, and will give him the sacrament of the body of Christ, my only-begotten Son, while he knows all the time that the communicant is involved in the darkness of mortal sin. Nevertheless, to please worldly men, and through his disordinate fear and the gift which he has received from them, he has administered the sacraments and buried a man with great honour in the Church, when he should have cast him forth as an animal and a corrupt member cut off from the body.

"What is the reason of this? Self-love and the horns of pride. For if he had really loved me above everything and that poor wretch's soul, he would have been humble and without fear would have sought his salvation.

"See, then, what evil follows these three vices which I have presented to thee under the form of three columns, from which proceed all other sins—pride, avarice, and impurity of mind and body. Thy ears would not be strong enough to hear how great are the evils which issue from these columns like wings of the devil. And through their pride, dishonour, and greed it sometimes happens (and thou hast seen such cases) that they will make simple women of good faith like to themselves, for the poor creatures, fearing in their minds on account of their defects that they are possessed by the devil, come to the wretched priest believing that he can liberate them, but in reality they are merely applying to one devil to drive out another. And he in his greed receives their offering, and like a dishonourable, lascivious brute will say to these poor souls 'The defect which you have can only be removed in one way'—and thus will he cause them miserably to sin with him. Oh! demon, and more than a demon! For in everything hast thou become worse than a devil. For there are many devils who hold this sin in horror, wherefore thou hast become worse than they, for thou rollest thyself therein with delight like the pig in his sty. O foul animal, is this what I require of thee by virtue of the blood of which I have made thee my minister? That instead of driving the devil out of souls, thou should put him within them?

"Dost thou not see that the axe of divine justice is already laid to the root of thy tree? And I say to thee that thy iniquities shall be punished in due season with usury, if thou do not punish them with penance and contrition of heart.

"No respect will be paid thee because thou art a priest, and thou wilt rather be miserably punished and suffer, not only for thyself but for them also, for thou wilt be more cruelly punished than others, and perhaps thou wilt then remember how thou wast wont to drive out the devil with the demon of concupiscence.

"And so will it be with that other wretch, who goes to absolve a fellow-creature in mortal sin, and binds her instead with another and greater sin, sinning himself afresh with her. If thou remember, thou hast seen with thine own eyes such a case, on whom an evil man laid hands. Truly is such a man without the dog of conscience; indeed, he stifles others' consciences as well as his own.

"I have appointed them to chant and sing psalms during the night, reciting the divine office, and they occupy themselves in making charms and invoking the demon of midnight in order to cause those whom they sinfully love to come to them through their devilish incantations. It will seem to them that they come, but they do not really do so.

"Wretched man! I have appointed to thee to pass the vigils of the night in prayer and watching, so that on the morrow thou mayest go rightly disposed to the altar, and give forth the odour of virtue to the people and not the stench of vice. Thou hast been placed in an angelic state to converse by holy meditation with the angels in this life, and at last with them to enjoy me; but thou delightest in being one of the devils and in conversing with them even before thy death. The horns of thy pride have pierced the pupil of holy faith in the eye of thy intellect. Thou hast lost the light, and therefore seest not in what misery thou art; and thou believest not truly that every sin is punished and every virtue rewarded, for if thou didst truly believe

it thou wouldest not act so; thou wouldest not seek or desire such conversation as the devil's; rather wouldest thou flee in terror at the mention of his name; but because thou obeyest his will and takest delight in his actions thou seekest him, one blind man seeking another.

"I would have thee ask the devil what reward he can give thee for the service thou payest him. He would reply that he will give thee the reward that he himself has obtained, for he can give thee nothing else than the cruel torments of the fire in which he continually burns since he fell from the height of heaven in his pride.

"And thou, an earthly angel, fallest by thy pride from the height of the dignity of the priesthood and from the treasure of virtue, into the poverty of thy many miseries; and if thou do not correct thyself thou wilt fall further into the depths of hell.

"Thou hast made the world and thyself thy god and thy lord. Tell the world to answer for thee before me, the supreme Judge, with all its delights which thou hast enjoyed in this life, and tell thy own sensuality to answer for thee—for it is thy sensuality which has caused thee to enjoy the things of the world—when I had placed you in the state of the priesthood in order to despise both thyself and the world. They will reply that they cannot help thee; they will make mock of thee, saying that success is thy own affair, and thou wilt remain confounded and guilty before me and the world.

"All this loss of time thou seest not actually, because, as I have said, the horns of thy pride have blinded thee; but thou wilt see it at the extremity of death, when thou canst seek no remedy in any virtue of thine own, except only in my mercy, if thou hopest in that sweet blood of which thou wast made the minister. This hope, indeed, will never be taken from thee, nor from anyone, as long as you are still willing to hope in the blood and in my mercy, although no one should be such a fool, nor thou so blind, as to go on up till the last moment without conversion.

"Remember that at that last extremity the man who

has lived wickedly is accused by the devil and the world and his own fragility, and they do not deceive him or show him pleasure where is bitterness, or perfection where is imperfection, or light for darkness, as they used to do during his life; they show him things as they are in truth. The watch-dog of conscience, so enfeebled, begins now to bark so loudly that he leads the soul, as it were, to despair; but all should lay hold with hope on the blood, in spite of the sins which they have committed, because my mercy which ye receive in the blood is without any comparison greater than all the sins that are committed in the world.

"But let no one put off his repentance, for it is a terrible thing for a man to find himself disarmed on the field of battle in the presence of many enemies."

CHAPTER CXXX

Of many other sins which the said wretched ministers commit.

"THESE wretches, O dearest daughter, of whom I have spoken to thee, take no thought for themselves, for if they did they would not come to such a pass, neither they nor others.

"But they would be like those who live in virtue, and who would prefer to die rather than sin and defile the face of their soul, and diminish the dignity in which I have placed them; they rather increase the dignity and beauty of their souls; not that the priestly dignity in itself can increase through virtue or diminish through sin, as I have said, but virtue is an ornament and a dignity with which such men adorn their souls over and above its natural beauty which it had from the beginning; when I created it to my image and likeness such as these would know the truth of my goodness and their own beauty and dignity, because pride and self-love would not have darkened them or deprived them of the light of reason, and they would love me, and the salvation of souls. But these poor

wretches, being entirely deprived of the light, and heedlessly going from vice to vice, so that at last they fall into the ditch, have made of the temple of their soul and of the holy Church, which should be a garden, a stable full of animals.

"How abominable it is to me, O dearest daughter, that their houses, which ought to be the homes of my servants, and of the poor, and where they should keep the breviary for their spouse, and the books of holy Scripture for their children, and should take delight in teaching their neighbour and in living a holy life, should have become the homes of impurity and wicked persons. Their spouse is no breviary (they treat the breviary as an adulteress) but a miserable she-devil who lives with them in impurity. Their holy Scriptures are a regiment of children, and with these children whom they have obtained in such foul misery they shamelessly take pleasure. The festivals and solemnities on which they should render praise and glory to my name, with divine office, offering me the incense of devout and humble prayers, they pass at play, and in taking solace with their she-devils, and they go off with companies of seculars, hunting beasts and birds as if themselves were seculars and fine court gentlemen. O wretched man, to what hast thou come? Thou shouldst hunt and snare souls to the glory and praise of my name in the garden of the holy Church, instead of wandering round the woods; but because thou hast become an animal, thy soul being filled with the animals of many mortal sins, hast thou made thyself a hunter and a snarer of animals; because the garden of thy soul has grown wild and full of thorns, thou takest delight in wandering through desert places hunting wild beasts. Look on thy sins and be ashamed, O man, for thou hast matter for shame on every side, but thou art without shame, having lost my true and holy fear. Shameless as a harlot, thou art proud of keeping great station in the world, and having a fine household, and a regiment of many children, and if thou hast none thou seekest to have them, so that they may inherit thy property; but thou art a robber and a thief,

because thou knowest well that thou hast nothing to leave them, for thine heirs are the poor of the holy Church.

"O incarnate devil, deprived of light, thou seekest that which thou oughtest not to seek, thou praisest and vauntest thyself of that which should cause thee the greatest confusion and shame before me who see the interior of thy heart, and before creatures. But the horns of thy pride do not let thee see thy shame. I have placed him, dearest daughter, on the bridge of my doctrine and my truth to administer to you pilgrims the sacraments of the holy Church, and he remains in the river of misery under the Bridge, and administers my sacraments standing in the river of the delights and miseries of the world, and he does not see that the tide of death is gaining on him, and that he travels in company with his masters the devils whom he has served and allowed to direct his journey through the river without any restraint. And if he do not correct himself he will reach eternal damnation, and such punishment and reprobation that thy tongue would not be able to narrate it, and indeed far more than a secular. For the same fault is more severely punished in him than in a secular, and with graver reprobation do his enemies rise up before him on the bridge of death to accuse him, as I said to thee."

CHAPTER CXXXI

Of the difference between the death of a just man and that of a sinner, and first of the death of the just man.

"HAVING told thee how the world and the devils accuse these wretches, which is indeed the truth, I wish to speak to thee in more detail on this point (so that thou mayest have greater compassion on these poor wretches), telling thee how different are the struggles of the soul of a just man from those of a sinner, and how different are their deaths, and how the peace of the just man's death is greater or less according to the perfection of his soul.

For I wish thee to know that all the sufferings which rational creatures endure depend on their will, because if their will were in accordance with mine they would endure no suffering; not that they would have no labours on that account, but because labours cause no suffering to a will which gladly endures them, seeing that they are ordained by my will. Such men as these wage war with the world, the devil, and their own sensuality through holy hatred of themselves. Wherefore when they come to the point of death, they die peacefully, because they have vanquished their enemies during their life. The world cannot accuse such a man, because he saw through its deceptions and therefore renounced it with all its delights. His sensual fragility and his body do not accuse him, because he bound sensuality like a slave with the rein of reason, macerating his flesh with penance, with watchings, and humble and continual prayer. The will of his senses he slew with hatred and dislike of vice, and with love of virtue. He has entirely lost all tenderness for his body, which tenderness and love between the soul and the body makes death seem difficult, and on account of it man naturally fears death; but since the virtue of a just and perfect man transcends nature, extinguishing his natural fear and overcoming it with holy hatred of himself and desire of arriving at his last end, his natural tenderness cannot make war on him, and his conscience remains in peace; for during his life his conscience kept a good guard, warning him when enemies were coming to attack the city of his soul, like a watch-dog which stands at the door, and when it sees enemies warns the guards by its barking, for in this way the dog of conscience warns the sentry of reason, and the reason together with the free-will know by the light of the intellect whether the stranger be friend or enemy. To a friend, that is to say, to virtue and holy thoughts, he gave his delighted love, receiving and using these with great solicitude; to an enemy, that is to say, to vice and wicked thoughts, he gave hatred and displeasure. And with the knife of hatred of self, and love of me, and with the light of reason, and the hand of

free-will he struck his enemies; so that at the point of death his conscience, having been a faithful guardian, does not gnaw but remains in peace.

"It is true that a just soul, through humility, and because at the moment of death she realizes better the value of time and of the jewels of virtue, reproves herself, seeming to herself to have used her time but little; but this is not an afflictive pain, but rather profitable, for the soul, recollected in herself, is caused by it to throw herself before the blood of the humble and immaculate Lamb my Son. The just man does not turn his head to admire his past virtues, because he neither can nor will hope in his own virtues, but only in the blood in which he has found mercy; and as he lived in the memory of that blood, so in death he is inebriated and drowned in the same. How is it that the devils cannot reprove him of sin? Because during his life he conquered their malice with wisdom, yet they come round him to see if they can acquire anything, and appear in horrible shapes in order to frighten him with hideous aspect, and many diverse phantasms, but the poison of sin not being in his soul, their aspect causes him no terror or fear, as it would do to another who had lived wickedly in the world. Wherefore the devils, seeing that the soul has entered into the blood with ardent love, cannot endure the sight, but stand afar off shooting their arrows. But their war and their shouts cannot hurt that soul, who already is beginning to taste eternal life, as I said to thee in another place, for with the eye of the intellect illuminated by the pupil of the holy faith, she sees me, the Infinite and Eternal Good, whom she hopes to obtain by grace, not as her due, but by virtue of Jesus Christ my Son.

"Wherefore opening the arms of hope and seizing him with the hands of love, she seems to enter into his possession before she actually does so, in the way which I have narrated to thee in another place. Passing suddenly, drowned in the blood, by the narrow door of the Word she reaches me, the Sea Pacific. For sea and door are united together. I and the Truth, my only-begotten Son

being one and the same thing. What joy such a soul receives who sees herself so sweetly arrived at this pass, for in Truth she tastes the happiness of the angelic nature! This joy is received by all those who pass in this sweet manner, but to a far greater extent by my ministers, of whom I spoke to thee, who have lived like angels, for in this life have they lived with greater knowledge, and with greater hunger for the salvation of souls. I do not speak only of the light of virtue which all can have in general, but of the supernatural light which these men possessed over and above the light of virtuous living, the light, that is, of holy science, by which science they knew more of my Truth, and he who knows more loves me more, and he who loves me more receives more. Your reward is measured according to the measure of your love, and if thou shouldst ask me whether one who has no science can attain to this love, I should reply, Yes, it is possible that he may attain to it; but an individual case does not make a general law, and I always discourse to thee in general.

"They also receive greater dignity on account of their priesthood, because they have personally received the office of eating souls in my honour. For just as everyone has the office of remaining in charity with his neighbour, to them is given the office of administering the blood, and of governing souls.

"Wherefore if they do this solicitously and with love of virtue they receive, as has been said, more than others. Oh! how happy are their souls when they come to the extremity of death! For they have been the defenders and preachers of the faith to their neighbour. This faith they have incarnated in their very marrow, and with it they see their place of repose in me. The hope with which they have lived, confiding in my providence and losing all trust in themselves, in that they did not hope in their own knowledge, and having lost hope in themselves, placed no inordinate love in any fellow-creature or in any created thing; having lived in voluntary poverty, causes them now with great delight to lift their confidence towards me.

Their heart, which was a vessel of love, inscribed by their ardent charity with my name, they showed forth with the example of their good and holy life and by the doctrine of their words to their neighbour. This heart then arises and seizes me, who am its End, with ineffable love, restoring to me the pearl of justice which it always carried before it, doing justice to all and discreetly rendering to each his due. Wherefore this man renders to me justice with true humility, and renders glory and praise to my name, because he refers to me the grace of having been able to run his course with a pure and holy conscience, and with himself he is indignant, deeming himself unworthy of receiving such grace.

"His conscience gives good testimony of him to me, and I justly give him the crown of justice, adorned with the pearls of the virtues—that is, of the fruit which love has drawn from the virtues. O earthly angel! happy thou art in that thou hast not been ungrateful for the benefits received from me, and hast not been negligent or ignorant, but hast solicitously opened thine eye by the true light, and kept it on thy subjects, and hast faithfully and manfully followed the doctrine of the Good Shepherd, sweet Christ Jesus, my only-begotten Son; wherefore thou art really now passing through him, the Door, bathed and drowned in his blood, with thy troop of lambs of whom thou hast brought many by thy holy doctrine and example to eternal life, and hast left many behind thee in a state of grace.

"O dearest daughter! to such as these the vision of the devils can do no harm, because of the vision which they have of me, which they see by faith and hold by love; the darkness and the terrible aspect of the demons do not give them trouble or any fear, because in them is not the poison of sin. There is no servile fear in them, but holy fear. Wherefore they do not fear the demon's deception, because with supernatural light and with the light of holy Scripture they know them, so that they do not cause them darkness or disquietude. So thus they gloriously pass, bathed in the blood, with hunger for the

salvation of souls, all on fire with love for the neighbour, having passed through the door of the word and entered into me; and by my goodness each one is arranged in his place, and to each one is measured of the affection of love according as he has measured to me."

CHAPTER CXXXII

Of the death of sinners, and of their pains in the hour of death.

"NOT so excellent, dearest daughter, is the end of these other poor wretches who are in great misery as I have related to thee. How terrible and dark is their death! Because in the moment of death, as I told thee, the devil accuses them with great terror and darkness, showing his face, which thou knowest is so horrible that the creature would rather choose any pain that can be suffered in this world than see it; and so greatly does he freshen the sting of conscience that it gnaws him horribly. The disordinate delights and sensuality of which he made lords over his reason, accuse him miserably, because then he knows the truth of that which at first he knew not, and his error brings him to great confusion.

"In his life he lived unfaithfully to me—self-love having veiled the pupil of the most holy faith—wherefore the devil torments him with infidelity in order to bring him to despair. Oh! how hard for them is this battle, because it finds them disarmed, without the armour of affection and charity; because, as members of the devil, they have been deprived of it all. Wherefore they have not the supernatural light, neither the light of science, because they did not understand it, the horns of their pride not letting them understand the sweetness of its marrow. Wherefore now in the great battle they know not what to do. They are not nourished in hope, because they have not hoped in me, neither in the blood of which I made them ministers, but in themselves alone, and in the dignities and delights of the world. And the incarnate wretch did not see that

all was counted to him with interest, and that as a debtor he would have to render an account to me; now he finds himself denuded and without any virtue, and on whichever side he turns he hears nothing but reproaches with great confusion. His injustice which he practised in his life accuses him to his conscience, wherefore he dares not ask other than justice.

"And I tell thee that so great is that shame and confusion that unless in their life they have taken the habit of hoping in my mercy, that is, have taken the milk of mercy (although on account of their sins this is great presumption, for you cannot truly say that he who strikes me with the arm of my mercy has a hope in mercy, but rather has presumption), there is not one who would not despair, and with despair they would arrive with the devil in eternal damnation.

"But arriving at the extremity of death, and recognising his sin, his conscience, unloaded by holy confession, and presumption taken away, so that he offends no more, there remains mercy, and with this mercy he can, if he will, take hold on hope. This is the effect of my mercy to cause them to hope therein during their life, although I do not grant them this so that they should offend me by means of my mercy, but rather that they should dilate themselves in charity, and in the consideration of my goodness. But they act in a contrary way, because they offend me in the hope which they have in my mercy. And nevertheless, I keep them in this hope so that at the last moment they may have something which they may lay hold of, and by so doing not faint away with the condemnation which they receive, and thus arrive at despair; for this final sin of despair is much more displeasing to me and injures them much more than all the other sins which they have committed. And this is the reason why this sin is more dangerous to them and displeasing to me, because they commit other sins through some delight of their own sensuality, and they sometimes grieve for them, and if they grieve in the right way their grief will procure them mercy. But it is no fragility of your nature which

moves you to despair, for there is no pleasure and nothing but intolerable suffering in it. One who despairs despises my mercy, making his sin to be greater than my mercy and goodness. Wherefore, if a man fall into this sin, he does not repent, and does not truly grieve for his offence against me as he should, grieving indeed for his own loss, but not for the offence done to me, and therefore he receives eternal damnation. See, therefore, that this sin alone leads him to hell, where he is punished for this and all the other sins which he has committed; whereas had he grieved and repented for the offence done to me, and hoped in my mercy, he would have found mercy, for, as I have said to thee, my mercy is greater without any comparison than all the sins which any creature can commit; wherefore it greatly displeases me that they should consider their sins to be greater.

"Despair is that sin which is pardoned neither here nor hereafter, and it is because despair displeases me so much that I wish them to hope in my mercy at the point of death, even if their life have been disordered and wicked. This is why during their life I use this sweet trick with them, making them hope greatly in my mercy, for when, having fed themselves with this hope, they arrive at death, they are not so inclined to abandon it, on account of the severe condemnation they receive, as if they had not so nourished themselves.

"All this is given them by the fire and abyss of my inestimable love, but because they have used it in the darkness of self-love, from which has proceeded their every sin, they have not known it in truth, but in so far as they have turned their affections towards the sweetness of my mercy they have thought of it with great presumption. And this is another cause of reproof which their conscience gives them in the likeness of the devil, reproving them in that they should have used the time and the breadth of my mercy in which they hoped, in charity and love of virtue, and that the time which I gave them through love should have been spent in holiness, whereas with all their time and great hope of my mercy they did nothing but offend

me miserably. Oh! blinder than the blind! Thou hast hidden thy pearl and thy talent which I placed in thy hands in order that thou mightest gain more with it, but thou in thy presumption wouldst not do my will, rather thou didst hide it under the ground of disordinate self-love, which now renders thee the fruit of death.

"Thy miseries are not hid from thee now, for the worm of conscience sleeps no longer, but is gnawing thee, the devils shout and render to thee the reward which they are accustomed to give their servants, that is to say, confusion and condemnation; they wish to bring thee to despair, so that at the moment of death thou mayest not escape from their hands, and therefore they try to confuse thee, so that afterwards when thou art with them they may render to thee of the part which is theirs. O wretch! the dignity in which I placed thee, thou now seest shining as it really is, and thou knowest to thy shame that thou hast held and used in such guilty darkness the substance of the holy Church, that thou seest thyself to be a thief, a debtor, who ought to pay his debt to the poor and the holy Church. Then thy conscience represents to thee that thou hast spent the money on public harlots, and hast brought up thy children and enriched thy relations, and hast thrown it away on gluttony and on many silver vessels and other adornments for thy house. Whereas thou shouldst have lived in voluntary poverty.

"Thy conscience represents to thee the divine office which thou didst neglect, by which thou didst fall into the guilt of mortal sin, and how even when thou didst recite it with thy mouth thy heart was far from me. Conscience also shows thee thy subjects, that is to say, the love and hunger which thou shouldst have felt towards nourishing them in virtue, giving them the example of thy life and striking them with the hand of mercy and the rod of justice, and because thou didst the contrary thy conscience and the horrible likeness of the devil reproves thee.

"And if as a prelate thou hast given prelacies or any charge of souls unjustly to one of thy subjects, that is, that thou hast considered to whom and how thou wert

giving it, the devil puts this also before thy conscience, because thou oughtest to have given it not on account of pleasant words, nor in order to please creatures, nor for the sake of gifts, but solely with regard to virtue, my honour and the salvation of souls. And since thou hast not done so thou art reproved, and for thy greater pain and confusion thou hast before thy conscience and the light of thine intellect that which thou hast done and ought not to have done, and that which thou oughtest to have done and hast not done.

"I wish thee to know, dearest daughter, that whiteness is better seen when placed on a black ground, and blackness on a white, than when they are separated. So it happens to these wretches, to these in particular and to all others in general, for at death, when the soul begins to see its woes, and the just man his beatitude, his evil life is represented to a wicked man, and there is no reason that anyone should remind him of the sins that he has committed, for his conscience places them before him together with the virtues which he ought to have practised. Why the virtues? For his greater shame. For vice being placed on a ground of virtue is known better on account of the virtue, and the better he knows his sin, the greater his shame, and by comparison with his sin he knows better the perfection of virtue, wherefore he grieves the more, for he sees that his own life was devoid of any; and I wish thee to know that in this knowledge which dying sinners have of virtue and vice they see only too clearly the good which follows the virtue of a just man, and the pain that comes on him who has lain in the darkness of mortal sin. I do not give him this knowledge so that he may despair, but so that he may come to a perfect self-knowledge and shame for his sins, with hope, so that with that pain and knowledge he may pay for his sins, and appease my anger, humbly begging my mercy. The virtuous man increases thereby in joy and in knowledge of my love, for he attributes the grace of having followed virtue in the doctrine of my truth to me and not to himself, wherefore he exalts in me, with this truly illuminated knowledge, and tastes and

receives the sweet end of his being in the way which I have related to thee in another place. So that the one, that is to say, the just man, who has lived in ardent charity, exalts in joy, while the wicked man is darkened and confounded in sorrow.

"To the just man the appearance and vision of the devil causes no harm or fear, for fear and harm can only be caused to him by sin; but those who have passed their lives lasciviously and in many sins, receive both harm and fear from the appearance of the devils, not indeed the harm of despair if they do not wish it, but the suffering of condemnation, of the refreshing of the worm of conscience, and of fear and terror at their horrible aspect. See now, dearest daughter, how different are the sufferings and the battle of death to a just man and to a sinner, and how different is their end.

"I have shown to the eye of thy intellect a very small part of what happens, and so small is what I have shown thee with regard to what it really is, to the suffering, that is, of the one, and the happiness of the other, that it is but a trifle. See how great is the blindness of man, and in particular of these ministers, for the more they have received of me, and the more they are enlightened by the holy Scripture, the greater are their obligations and more intolerable confusion do they receive for not fulfilling them; the more they knew of holy Scripture during their life, the better do they know at their death the great sins they have committed, and their torments are greater than those of others, just as good men are placed in a higher degree of excellence. Theirs is the fate of the false Christian, who is placed in hell in greater torment than a pagan, because he had the light of faith and renounced it, while the pagan never had it.

"So these wretches will be punished more than other Christians for the same sin, on account of the ministry which I entrusted to them, appointing them to administer the sun of the holy sacrament, and because they had the light of science, in order to discern the truth both for themselves and others had they wished to; wherefore they

justly receive the greater pains. But the wretches do not know this, for did they consider their state at all, they would not come to such misery, but would be that which they ought to be and are not. For the whole world has thus become corrupt, they being much more guilty than seculars, according to their state; for with their stench they defile the face of their soul, and corrupt their subjects, and suck the blood from my spouse, that is, the holy Church, wherefore through these sins they make her grow pale, because they divert to themselves the love and charity which they should have to this divine spouse, and think of nothing but stripping her for their own advantage, seizing prelacies, and great properties, when they ought to be seeking souls. Wherefore through their evil life, seculars become irreverent and disobedient to the holy Church, not that they ought on that account to do so, or that their sins are excused through the sins of my ministers."

CHAPTER CXXXIII

A brief repetition of many things said above, and how GOD altogether forbids that priests should be touched by the hand of seculars; and how he invites this soul to weep over these wretched priests.

"THERE are many other sins of which I might speak to thee, but I do not wish to make thine ears itch any longer. I have told thee so much in order to satisfy thy desire, and so that thou mayest be more solicitous to offer before me thy sweet, amorous, and bitter longings. And I have told thee that the excellence to which I have appointed them, and of the treasure which is administered to you by their hands, that is, of the holy sacrament, wholly God and wholly man, illustrating this truth to thee by the figure of the sun in order that thou mightest see that the virtue of the sacrament is not diminished by their sins, and that therefore it is my will that your reverence towards them should not diminish on that account. And I have shown thee the excellence of my virtuous ministers in whom shines the pearl of holy justice and the other virtues.

I have also shown thee how displeasing to me is the offence committed by persecutors of the holy Church, and also the irreverence in which they hold the blood. For the persecutions directed against my ministers I consider as directed against the blood and not against them, for I have forbidden my Christs to be touched. I have also related to thee somewhat of the shameful life of my ministers, how wretchedly they live, and what pain and confusion they receive at their death, and how much more cruelly than others they are punished after death. I have now fulfilled my promise to thee, which was to tell thee something of their life, and having consented to fulfil my promise, have satisfied thy demand.

"I now repeat to thee what I said at first, that however great their sins might be, even if they were greater than I have mentioned, I do not wish any secular to occupy himself in punishing them; and if they do so their sin will not remain unpunished unless they punish it themselves, amending their lives with contrition of heart. For both secular and priest are incarnate devils, and through the divine justice one devil punishes another, and both sin, so that the secular is not excused through the sin of the prelate, nor the prelate through the sin of the secular.

"I now invite thee, dearest daughter, and all my other servants, to weep over these corpses, and to remain like lambs in the garden of the holy Church, feeding there with holy desire and continued prayers, offering them before me for their sakes, for I wish to do mercy to the world; and do not leave this food of yours either through injuries or through prosperity, for I do not wish my servants to lift their heads with impatience or disordinate joy, but humbly to devote yourselves to my honour and the salvation of souls, and to the reformation of the holy Church. And this will be a proof to me that thou and my other servants love me in truth. Thou knowest well that I showed thee how I wished thee and my other servants to be lambs ever feeding in the garden of the holy Church, enduring with fatigue up to the last moment of their lives, and if in truth thou doest so I will fulfil thy desires."

CHAPTER CXXXIV

How this devout soul, praising and thanking GOD, made a prayer for the holy Church.

THEN this soul, as if inebriated, tormented, and on fire with love, her heart wounded with great bitterness, turned herself to the Supreme and Eternal Goodness, saying: O Eternal God! O Light above every other light, from whom issues all light! O Fire above every fire, because thou art the only Fire who burnest without consuming, and consumest all sin and self-love found in the soul, not afflicting her, but fattening her with insatiable love, and though the soul is filled she is not sated, but ever desires thee, and the more of thee she has, the more she seeks—and the more she desires, the more she finds and tastes of thee—Supreme and Eternal Fire, Abyss of Charity. O Supreme and Eternal Good, who has moved thee, Infinite God, to illuminate me, thy finite creature, with the light of thy Truth? Thou, the same Fire of Love, art the cause, because it is always love which constrained and constrains thee to create us in thine image and similitude, and to do us mercy, giving immeasurable and infinite graces to thy rational creatures. O Goodness above all goodness! Thou alone art he who is supremely Good, and nevertheless thou gavest the Word, thy only-begotten Son, to converse with us filthy ones and filled with darkness. What was the cause of this? Love. Because thou lovedst us before we were. O Good! O Eternal Greatness! Thou madest thyself low and small to make man great. On whichever side I turn I find nothing but the abyss and fire of thy charity. And can a wretch like me pay back to thee the graces and the burning charity that thou hast shown and showest with so much burning love in particular to me beyond common charity, and the love that thou showest to all thy creatures? No, but thou alone, most sweet and amorous Father, art he who will be thankful and grateful for me, that is, that the affection of thy charity itself will render

thee thanks, because I am she who is not, and if I spoke as being anything of myself, I should be lying by my own head, and should be a lying daughter of the devil, who is the father of lies, because thou alone art he who is. And my being and every further grace that thou hast bestowed upon me, I have from thee, who givest them to me through love, and not as my due.

"O sweetest Father, when the human race lay sick through the sin of Adam, thou didst send it a Physician, the sweet and amorous Word—thy Son; and now, when I was lying infirm with the sickness of negligence and much ignorance, thou, most soothing and sweet Physician, Eternal God, hast given a soothing, sweet, and bitter medicine, that I may be cured and rise from my infirmity. Thou hast soothed me because with thy love and gentleness thou hast manifested thyself to me, sweet above all sweetness, and hast illuminated the eye of my intellect with the light of most holy faith, with which light, according as it has pleased thee to manifest it to me, I have known the excellence of grace which thou hast given to the human race, administering to it the entire God-Man in the mystic body of the holy Church. And I have known the dignity of thy ministers whom thou hast appointed to administer thee to us. I desired that thou wouldst fulfil the promise that thou madest to me, and thou gavest much more, more even than I knew how to ask for. Wherefore I know in truth that the heart of man knows not how to ask or desire as much as thou canst give, and thus I see that thou art he who is the Supreme and Eternal Good, and that we are they who are not. And because thou art infinite, and we are finite, thou givest that which thy rational creature cannot desire enough; for she cannot desire it in itself, nor in the way in which thou canst and wilt satisfy the soul, filling her with things for which she does not ask thee. Moreover, I have received light from thy Greatness and Charity, through the love which thou hast for the whole human race, and in particular for thy anointed ones, who ought to be earthly angels in this life. Thou hast shown me the virtue and beatitude of these thy

anointed ones who have lived like burning lamps, shining with the pearl of justice in the holy Church. And by comparison with these I have better understood the sins of those who live wretchedly. Wherefore I have conceived a very great sorrow at thy offence and the harm done to the whole world, for they do harm to the world, being mirrors of sin when they ought to be mirrors of virtue. And because thou hast manifested and grieved over their iniquities to me—a wretch who am the cause and instrument of many sins—I am plunged in intolerable grief.

"Thou, O inestimable love, hast manifested this to me, giving me a sweet and bitter medicine that I might wholly arise out of the infirmity of my ignorance and negligence, and have recourse to thee with anxious and solicitous desire, knowing myself and thy goodness and the offences which are committed against thee by all sorts of people, so that I might shed a river of tears, drawn from the knowledge of thy infinite goodness, over my wretched self and over those who are dead in that they live miserably. Wherefore I do not wish, O Eternal Father, Ineffable Fire of Love, that my heart should ever grow weary, or my eyes fail through tears, in desiring thy honour and the salvation of souls, but I beg of thee, by thy grace, that they may be as two streams of water issuing from thee, the Sea Pacific. Thanks, thanks to thee, O Father, for having granted me that which I asked thee and that which I neither knew nor asked, for by thus giving me matter for grief thou hast invited me to offer before thee sweet, loving, and yearning desires, with humble and continual prayer. Now I beg of thee that thou wilt do mercy to the world and to the holy Church. I pray thee to fulfil that which thou didst cause me to ask thee. Alas! what a wretched and sorrowful soul is mine, the cause of all these evils. Do not put off any longer thy merciful designs towards the world, but descend and fulfil the desire of thy servants.

"Ah me! thou causest them to cry in order to hear their voices! Thy truth told us to cry out, and we should be answered; to knock, and it would be opened to us; to

beg, and it would be given to us. O Eternal Father, thy servants do cry out to thy mercy; do thou then reply.

"I know well that mercy is thine own attribute, wherefore thou canst not destroy it or refuse it to him who asks for it. Thy servants knock at the door of thy truth, because in the truth of thy only-begotten Son they know the ineffable love which thou hast for man, wherefore the fire of thy love ought not and cannot refrain from opening to him who knocks with perseverance. Wherefore open, unlock, and break the hardened hearts of thy creatures, not for their sakes who do not knock, but on account of thy infinite goodness, and through love of thy servants who knock at thee for their sakes. Grant the prayer of those, Eternal Father, who, as thou seest, stand at the door of thy truth and pray. For what do they pray? For with the blood of this Door—thy Truth—hast thou washed our iniquities and destroyed the stain of Adam's sin. The blood is ours, for thou hast made it our bath, wherefore thou canst not deny it to anyone who truly asks for it. Give, then, the fruit of thy blood to thy creatures. Place in the balance the price of the blood of thy Son, so that the infernal devils may not carry off thy lambs. Thou art the Good Shepherd who, to fulfil thy obedience, laid down his life for thy lambs, and made for us a bath of his blood.

"That blood is what thy hungry servants beg of thee at this door, begging thee through it to do mercy to the world, and to cause thy holy Church to bloom with the fragrant flowers of good and holy pastors, who by their sweet odour shall extinguish the stench of the putrid flowers of sin. Thou hast said, Eternal Father, that through the love which thou hast for thy rational creatures, and the prayers and the many virtues and labours of thy servants, thou wouldst do mercy to the world, and reform the Church, and thus give us refreshment; wherefore do not delay, but turn the eye of thy mercy towards us, for thou must first reply to us before we can cry out with the voice of thy mercy. Open the door of thy inestimable love which thou hast given us through the door of thy Word.

I know indeed that thou openest before even we can knock, for it is with the affection of love which thou hast given to thy servants, that they knock and cry to thee, seeking thy honour and the salvation of souls. Give them then the bread of life, that is to say, the fruit of the blood of thy only-begotten Son, which they ask of thee for the praise and glory of my name and the salvation of souls. For more glory and praise will be thine in saving so many creatures, than in leaving them obstinate in their hardness of heart. To thee, Eternal Father, everything is possible, and even though thou hast created us without our own help, thou wilt not save us without it. I beg of thee to force their wills, and dispose them to wish for that for which they do not wish; and this I ask thee through thy infinite mercy. Thou hast created us from nothing; now, therefore, that we are in existence, do mercy to us, and remake the vessels which thou hast created to thy image and likeness. Recreate them to grace in thy mercy and the blood of thy Son sweet Christ Jesus."

A TREATISE OF OBEDIENCE

CHAPTER CXXXV

Here begins the treatise of obedience, and first of where obedience may be found, and what it is that destroys it, and what is the sign of a man's possessing it, and what accompanies and nourishes obedience.

THE Supreme and Eternal Father, kindly turning the eye of his mercy and clemency towards her, replied: "Thy holy desire and righteous request, O dearest daughter, have a right to be heard, and inasmuch as I am the Supreme Truth, I will keep my word, fulfilling the promise which I made to thee, and satisfying thy desire. And if thou ask me where obedience is to be found, and what is the cause of its loss, and the sign of its possession, I reply that thou wilt find it in its completeness in the sweet and amorous Word, my only-begotten Son. So prompt in him was this virtue, that, in order to fulfil it, he hastened to the shameful death of the cross. What destroys obedience? Look at the first man and thou wilt see the cause which destroyed the obedience imposed on him by me, the Eternal Father. It was pride, which was produced by self-love, and desire to please his companion. This was the cause that deprived him of the perfection of obedience, giving him instead disobedience, depriving him of the life of grace, and slaying his innocence, wherefore he fell into impurity and great misery, and not only he, but the whole human race, as I said to thee. The sign that thou hast this virtue is patience, and impatience the sign that you have it not, and thou wilt find that this is indeed so, when I speak to thee further concerning this virtue. But observe that obedience may be kept in two ways, of which one is more perfect than the other; not that they are on that account separated, but united, as I explained to thee of the precepts and counsels. The one way is the most

perfect, the other is also good and perfect; for no one at all can reach eternal life if he be not obedient, for the door was unlocked by the key of obedience, which had been fastened by the disobedience of Adam. I, then, being constrained by my infinite goodness, since I saw that man whom I so much loved, did not return to me, his End, took the keys of obedience and placed them in the hands of my sweet and amorous Word—the Truth—and he becoming the porter of that door, opened it, and no one can enter except by means of that door and that porter. Wherefore he said in the holy Gospel that '*no one could come to me, the Father, if not by him.*' When he returned to me, rising to heaven from the conversation of men at the Ascension, he left you this sweet key of obedience; for as thou knowest he left his vicar, the Christ on earth, whom you are all obliged to obey until death, and whoever is outside his obedience is in a state of damnation, as I have already told thee in another place. Now I wish thee to see and know this most excellent virtue in that humble and immaculate Lamb, and the source whence it proceeds. What caused the great obedience of the Word? The love which he had for my honour and your salvation. Whence proceeded this love? From the clear vision with which his soul saw the divine essence and the Eternal Trinity, thus always looking on me, the Eternal God. His fidelity obtained this vision most perfectly for him, which vision you imperfectly enjoy by the light of holy faith. He was faithful to me, his Eternal Father, and therefore hastened as one enamoured along the road of obedience, lit up with the light of glory. And inasmuch as love cannot be alone, but is accompanied by all the true and royal virtues, because all the virtues draw their life from love. He possessed them all, but in a different way from that in which you do. Among the others he possessed patience, which is the marrow of obedience, and a demonstrative sign whether a soul be in a state of grace and truly love or not. Wherefore charity, the mother of patience, has given her as a sister to obedience, and so closely united them together that one cannot be lost without the other.

Either thou hast them both or thou hast neither. This virtue has a nurse who feeds her, that is, true humility; therefore a soul is obedient in proportion to her humility, and humble in proportion to her obedience. This humility is the foster-mother and nurse of charity, and with the same milk she feeds the virtue of obedience. Her raiment given her by this nurse is self-contempt and insult, desire to displease herself, and to please me. Where does she find this? In sweet Christ Jesus, my only-begotten Son. For who abased himself more than he did? He was sated with insults, jibes, and mockings. He caused pain to himself in his bodily life, in order to please me. And who was more patient than he? for his cry was never heard in murmuring, but he patiently embraced his injuries like one enamoured, fulfilling the obedience imposed on him by me, his Eternal Father. Wherefore in him thou wilt find obedience perfectly accomplished. He left you this rule and this doctrine, which gives you life, for it is the straight way, having first observed them himself. He is the way, wherefore he said, '*He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*' For he who travels by that way, travels in the light, and being enlightened cannot stumble, or be caused to fall, without perceiving it. For he has cast from himself the darkness of self-love, by which he fell into disobedience; for as I spoke to thee of a companion virtue proceeding from obedience and humility, so I tell you that disobedience comes from pride, which issues from self-love depriving the soul of humility. The sister given by self-love to disobedience is impatience, and pride, her foster-mother, feeds her with the darkness of infidelity, so she hastens along the way of darkness, which leads her to eternal death. All this you should read in that glorious book, where you find described this and every other virtue."

CHAPTER CXXXVI

How obedience is the key with which heaven is opened, and how the soul should fasten it by means of a cord to her girdle, and of the excellences of obedience.

"NOW that I have shown thee where obedience is to be found, and whence she comes, and who is her companion, and who her foster-mother, I will continue to speak of the obedient and of the disobedient together, and of obedience in general, which is the obedience of the precepts; and in particular, which is that of the counsels. The whole of your faith is founded upon obedience, for by it you prove your fidelity. You are all in general by my truth to obey the commandments of the law, the chief of which is to love me above everything, and your neighbour as yourself, and the commandments are so bound up together, that you cannot observe or transgress one without observing or transgressing all. He who observes this principal commandment observes all the others; he is faithful to me and his neighbour, for he loves me and my creature, and is therefore obedient, becoming subject to the commandments of the law and to creatures for my sake, and with humble patience he endures every labour, and even his neighbour's detraction of him. This obedience is of such excellence that ye all derive grace from it, just as from disobedience you all derive death. Wherefore it is not enough that it should be only in word, and not practised by you. I have already told you that this word is the key which opens heaven, which key my Son placed in the hands of his vicar. This vicar placed it in the hands of everyone who receives Holy Baptism, promising therein to renounce the world and all its pomps and delights, and to obey. So that each man has in his own person that very same key which the Word had, and if a man does not unlock in the light of faith and with the hand of love the gate of heaven by means of this key, he never will enter there, in spite of its having been opened by the Word; for though I created you without yourselves,

I will not save you without yourselves. Wherefore you must take the key in your hand and walk by the doctrine of my Word, and not remain seated, that is to say, placing your love in finite things, as do foolish men who follow the first man, their first father, following his example, and casting the key of obedience into the mud of impurity, breaking it with the hammer of pride, rusting it with self-love. It would have been entirely destroyed had not my only-begotten Son, the Word, come and taken this key of obedience in his hands and purified it in the fire of divine love, having drawn it out of the mud, and cleansed it with his blood, and straightened it with the knife of justice, and hammered your iniquities into shape on the anvil of his own body. So perfectly did he repair it that no matter how much a man may have spoilt his key by his free-will, by the self-same free-will, assisted by my grace, he can repair it with the same instruments that were used by my Word. Oh! blinder than the blind, for, having spoilt the key of obedience, thou dost not think of mending it! Dost thou think forsooth that the disobedience which closed the door of heaven will open it? that the pride which fell can rise? Dost thou think to be admitted to the marriage feast in foul and disordered garments? Dost thou think that sitting down and binding thyself with the chain of mortal sin, thou canst walk? or that without a key thou canst open the door? Do not imagine that thou canst, for it is a fantastical delusion; thou must be firm, thou must leave mortal sin by a holy confession, contrition of heart, satisfaction, and purpose of amendment. Then thou wilt throw off that hideous and defiled garment, and, clothed in the shining nuptial robe, wilt hasten, the key of obedience in thy hand, to open the door. But bind this key with the cord of self-contempt, and hatred of thyself and of the world, and fasten it to the love of pleasing me, thy creator, of which thou shouldst make a girdle to thyself to bind thy loins with it, for fear thou lose it. Know, my daughter, there are many who take up this key of obedience, having seen by the light of faith that in no other way can they escape

eternal damnation; but they hold it in their hand without wearing this girdle, or fastening the key to it with the cord of self-contempt, that is to say, that they are not perfectly clothed with my pleasure, but still seek to please themselves; they do not wear the cord of self-contempt, for they do not desire to be despised, but rather take delight in the praise of men. Such as these are apt to lose their key; for if they suffer a little extra fatigue, or mental or corporal tribulation, and if, as often happens, the hand of holy desire loosens its grasp, they will lose it. They can indeed find it again if they wish to while they live, but if they do not wish they will never find it, and what will prove to them that they have lost it? Impatience, for patience was united to obedience, and their impatience proves that obedience does not dwell in their soul. Oh! how sweet and glorious is this virtue, which contains all the rest, for she is conceived and born of charity; on her is founded the rock of the holy faith. She is a queen whose consort will feel no trouble, but only peace and quiet; the waves of the stormy sea cannot hurt her, nor can any tempest reach the interior of the soul in whom she dwells. Such a one feels no hatred when injured, because he wishes to obey the precept of forgiveness, he suffers not when his appetites are not satisfied, because obedience has ordered him to desire me alone, who can and will satisfy all his desires, if he strip himself of worldly riches. And so in all things which would be too long to relate, he who has chosen as spouse Queen Obedience, the appointed key of heaven, finds peace and quiet. O blessed obedience! thou voyagest without fatigue, and reachest without danger the port of salvation, thou art conformed to my only-begotten Son, the Word, thou boardest the ship of the holy cross, forcing thyself to endure, so as not to transgress the obedience of the Word, nor abandon his doctrine, of which thou makest a table when thou eatest the food of souls, dwelling in the love of thy neighbour, being anointed with true humility, which saves thee from coveting, contrary to my will, his possessions, thou walkest erect, without bending, for thy heart

is sincere and not false, loving generously and truly my creatures, thou art a sunrise drawing after thee the light of divine grace, thou art a sun which makes the earth, that is to say, the organs of the soul, to germinate with the heat of charity, all of which as well as those of the body produce life-giving fruit for thyself and thy neighbour. Thou art even cheerful, for thy face is never wrinkled with impatience, but smooth and pleasant with the happiness of patience, and even in its fortitude thou art great by thy long endurance, so long that it reaches from earth to heaven and unlocks the celestial door. Thou art a hidden pearl, trampled by the world, abasing thyself, submitting to all creatures. Yet thy kingdom is so great that no one can rule thee, for thou hast come out of the mortal servitude of thy own sensuality, which destroyed thy dignity, and having slain this enemy with hatred and dislike of thy own pleasure hast reobtained thy liberty."

CHAPTER CXXXVII

Here both the misery of the disobedient and the excellence of the obedient are spoken of.

"ALL this, dearest daughter, has been done by my goodness and providence, as I have told thee, for by my providence the Word repaired the key of obedience, but worldly men devoid of every virtue do the contrary; they, like unbridled horses, without the bit of obedience, go from bad to worse, from sin to sin, from misery to misery, from darkness to darkness, from death to death, until they finally reach the edge of the ditch of death, gnawed by the worm of their conscience, and though it is true that they can obey the precepts of the law if they will, and have the time for repenting of their disobedience, it is very hard for them to do so, on account of their long habit of sin. Therefore let no man trust to this, putting off his finding of the key of obedience to the moment of his death, for although everyone may and should hope as long as he has

life, he should not put such trust in this hope as to delay repentance. What is the reason of all this, and of such blindness that prevents them recognising this treasure? The cloud of self-love and wretched pride, through which they abandoned obedience, and fell into disobedience. Being disobedient they are impatient, as has been said, and in their impatience endure intolerable pain, for it has seduced them from the way of truth, leading them along a way of lies, making them slaves and friends of the devils, with whom, unless indeed they amend themselves with patience, they will go to the eternal torments. Contrariwise, my beloved sons, obedient and observers of the law, rejoice and exult in my eternal vision with the immaculate and humble Lamb, the maker, fulfiller, and giver of this law of obedience. Observing this law in this life they taste peace without any disturbance, they receive and clothe themselves in the most perfect peace, for there they possess every good without any evil, safety without any fear, riches without any poverty, satiety without disgust, hunger without pain, light without darkness, one supreme infinite good, shared by all those who taste it truly. What has placed them in so blessed a state? The blood of the Lamb, by virtue of which the key of obedience has lost its rust, so that, by the virtue of the blood, it has been able to unlock the door. O fools and madmen, delay no longer to come out of the mud of impurity, for you seem like pigs to wallow in the mire of your own lust. Abandon the injustice, murders, hatreds, rancours, detractions, murmurings, false judgements, and cruelty, with which you use your neighbours, your thefts and treacheries, and the disordinate pleasures and delights of the world; cut off the horns of pride, by which amputation you will extinguish the hatred which is in your heart against your neighbours. Compare the injuries which you do to me and to your neighbour with those done to you, and you will see that those done to you are but trifles. You will see that remaining in hatred you injure me by transgressing my precept, and you also injure the object of your hate, for you deprive him of your love, whereas you have been

commanded to love me above everything, and your neighbour as yourself. No gloss has been put upon these words, as if it should have been said, if your neighbour injures you do not love him; but they are to be taken naturally and simply, as they were said to you by my Truth, who himself literally observed this rule. Literally also should you observe it, and if you do not you will injure your own soul, depriving it of the life of grace. Take, oh! take, then, the key of obedience with the light of faith, walk no longer in such darkness or cold, but observe obedience in the fire of love, so that ye may taste eternal life together with the other observers of the law."

CHAPTER CXXXVIII

Of those who have such love for obedience that they do not remain content with the general obedience of precepts, but take on themselves a particular obedience.

"THERE are some, my dearest daughter, in whom the sweet and amorous fire of love towards obedience burns so high (which fire of love cannot exist without hatred of self-love, so that when the fire increases so does this self-hatred), that they are not content to observe the precepts of the Law with a general obedience as you are all obliged to do if you will have life and not death, but take upon themselves a particular obedience, following the greatest perfection, so that they become observers of the counsels both in deed and in thought. Such as these wish to bind themselves more tightly through self-hatred, and in order to restrain in everything their own will. They either place themselves under the yoke of obedience in holy religion, or without entering religion, they bind themselves to some creature, submitting their will to his, so as more expeditiously to unlock the door of heaven. These are they, as I have told thee, who have chosen the most perfect obedience. I have already spoken to thee of obedience in general, and as I know it to be thy will that I should speak to thee of this particular and most perfect obedience,

I will now relate to thee somewhat of this second kind, which is not divided from the first, but is more perfect, for, as I have already told thee, these two kinds of obedience are so closely united together that they cannot be separated. I have told thee where general obedience is to be found and whence it proceeds, and the cause of its loss. Now I will speak to thee of this particular obedience, not altering, however, the fundamental principle of the virtue."

CHAPTER CXXXIX

How a soul advances from general to particular obedience; and of the excellence of the religious orders.

"THE soul who with love has submitted to the yoke of obedience, to the Commandments, following the doctrine of my truth, virtuously exercising herself, as has been said, in this general kind of obedience, will advance to the second kind by means of the same light which brought her to the first, for by the light of the most holy faith she would have learnt, in the blood of the humble Lamb, my truth —the ineffable love which I have for her, and her own fragility, which cannot respond to me with due perfection. So she wanders, seeking by that light in what place and in what way she can pay her debt, trampling on her own fragility, and restraining her own will. Enlightened in her search by faith, she finds the place—namely, holy religion —which has been founded by the Holy Spirit, appointed as the ship to receive souls who wish to hasten to perfection, and to bring them to the port of salvation. The Captain of this ship is the Holy Spirit, who never fails in himself through the defects of any of his religious subjects who may transgress the rule of the order. The ship itself cannot be damaged, but only the offender. It is true that the mistake of the steersman may send her down into the billows, and these are wicked pastors and prelates appointed by the Master of the ship. The ship herself is so delightful that thy tongue could not narrate it. I

say, then, that the soul, on fire with desire and a holy self-hatred, having found her place by the light of faith, enters there as one dead, if she is truly obedient; that is to say, if she have perfectly observed general obedience. And even if she should be imperfect when she enters, it does not follow that she cannot attain perfection. On the contrary, she attains it by exercising herself in the virtue of obedience; indeed, most of those who enter are imperfect. There are some who enter already in perfection, others in the childhood of virtue, others through fear, others through penance, others through allurements; everything depends on whether after they have entered they exercise themselves in virtue, and persevere till death, for no true judgement can be made on a person's entrance into religion, but only on his perseverance, for many have appeared to be perfect who have afterwards turned back or remained in the order with much imperfection, so that, as I have said, the act of entrance into this ship ordained by me, who call men in different ways, does not supply material for a real judgement, but only the love of those who persevere therein with true obedience. This ship is rich, so that there is no need for the subject to think about his necessities either temporal or spiritual, for if he is truly obedient, and observes his order, he will be provided for by his Master, who is the Holy Spirit, as I told thee when I spoke to thee of my providence, saying that though thy servants might be poor, they were never beggars. No more are these, for they find everything they need, and those who observe this order find this to be indeed true. Wherefore, see that in the days when the religious orders lived virtuously, blossoming with true poverty and fraternal charity, their temporal substance never failed them, but they had more than their needs demanded. But because the stench of self-love has entered and caused each to keep his private possessions and to fail in obedience, their temporal substance has failed, and the more they possess, to the greater destitution do they come. It is just that even in the smallest matters they should experience the fruit of disobedience, for had they

been obedient and observed the vow of poverty, each would not have taken his own, and lived privately. See the riches of these holy rules, so thoughtfully and luminously appointed by those who were temples of the Holy Spirit. See with what judgement Benedict ordered his ship; see with what perfection and order of poverty Francis ordered his ship, decked with the pearls of virtue, steering it in the way of lofty perfection, being the first to give to his order for spouse true and holy poverty, whom he had chosen for himself, embracing self-contempt and self-hatred, not desiring to please any creature but only thy will; desiring rather to be thought vile by the world, macerating his body and slaying his will, clothing himself in insults, sufferings, and jibes, for love of the humble Lamb, with whom he was fastened and nailed to the cross by love, so that by a singular grace there appeared in his body the very wounds of thy Truth, showing in the vessel of his body that which was in the love of his soul, so he prepared the way.

"But thou wilt say, 'Are not all the other religious orders equally founded on this point?' Yes, but though they are all founded on it, in no other is this the principal foundation; as with the virtues, though all the virtues draw their life from charity, nevertheless, as I explained to thee in another place, one virtue belongs especially to one man, and another to another, and yet they all remain in charity, so with the principal foundation of the religious orders. Poverty belonged especially to my poor man Francis, who placed the principal foundation of his order in love for this poverty, and made it very strict for those who were perfect, for the few and the good, not for the majority. I say few because they are not many who choose this perfection, though now through their sins they are multiplied in numbers and deficient in virtue, not through defect of the ship, but through disobedient subjects and wicked rulers. Now look at the ship of thy father Dominic, my beloved son: he ordered it most perfectly, wishing that his sons should apply themselves only to my honour and the salvation of souls, with the light of science, which light he laid

as his principal foundation, not, however, on that account being deprived of true and voluntary poverty, but having it also. And as a sign that he had it truly, and that the contrary displeased him, he left as an heirloom to his sons his curse and mine, if they should hold any possessions, either privately or in community, as a sign that he had chosen for his spouse Queen Poverty. But for his more immediate and personal object he took the light of science in order to extirpate the errors which had arisen in his time, thus taking on him the office of my only-begotten Son, the Word. Rightly he appeared as an apostle in the world, and sowed the seed of my Word with much truth and light, dissipating darkness and giving light. He was a light which I gave the world by means of Mary, placed in the mystical body of the holy Church as an extirpator of heresies. Why do I say by means of Mary? Because Mary gave him his habit—this office was committed to her by my goodness. At what table does he feed his sons with the light of science? At the table of the Cross, which is the table of holy desire, when souls are eaten for my honour. Dominic does not wish his sons to apply themselves to anything, but remaining at this table, there to seek with the light of science the glory and praise of my name alone, and the salvation of souls. And in order that they might do nothing else, he chose poverty for them, so that they might not have the care of temporal things. It is true that some failed in faith, fearing that they would not be provided for, but he never. Being clothed in faith, and hoping with firm confidence in my providence, he wishes his sons to observe obedience and do their duty, and since impure living obscures the eye of the intellect, and not only the eye of the intellect, but also of the body, he does not wish them to obscure their physical light with which they may more perfectly obtain the light of science; wherefore he imposed on them the third vow of continence, and wishes that all should observe it, with true and perfect obedience, although to-day it is badly observed. They also prevent the light of science with the darkness of pride, not that this light can be darkened in itself, but only in

their souls, for where pride is there can be no obedience. I have already told thee that a man's humility is in proportion to his obedience, and his obedience to his humility, and similarly, when he transgresses the vow of obedience, it rarely happens that he does not also transgress the vow of continence, either in thought or deed; so that he has rigged his ship with the three ropes of obedience, continence, and true poverty; he made it a royal ship, not obliging his subjects under pain of mortal sin, and illuminated by me the true light, he provided for those who should be less perfect, for though all who observe the order are perfect in kind, yet one possesses a higher degree of perfection than another, yet all, perfect or imperfect, live well in this ship. He allied himself with my truth, showing that he did *not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live*. Wherefore his religion is a delightful garden, broad and joyous and fragrant, but the wretches who do not observe the order, but transgress its vows, have turned it into a desert and defiled it with their scanty virtue and light of science, though they are nourished at its breast. I do not say that the order itself is in this condition, for it still possesses every delight, but in the beginning its subjects were not as they are now, but blooming flowers, and men of great perfection. Each seemed to be another St Paul, their eyes so illuminated that the darkness of error was dissipated by their glance. Look at my glorious Thomas, who gazed with the gentle eye of his intellect at my Truth, whereby he acquired supernatural light and science infused by grace, for he obtained it rather by means of prayer than by human study. He was a brilliant light, illuminating his order and the mystical body of the holy Church, dissipating the clouds of heresy. Look at my Peter, virgin and martyr, who by his blood gave light among the darkness of many heresies, and the heretics hated him so that at last they took his life; yet while he lived he applied himself to nothing but prayer, preaching, and disputation with heretics, hearing confessions, announcing the truth, and spreading the faith without

any fear, to such an extent that he not only confessed it in his life but even at the moment of his death, for when he was at the last extremity, having neither voice nor ink left, having received his death-blow, he dipped his finger in his blood, and this glorious martyr, having not paper on which to write, leaned over, confessing the faith, and wrote the *Credo* on the ground. His heart burnt in the furnace of my charity, so that he never slackened his pace nor turned his head back, though he knew that he was to die, for I had revealed to him his death, but like a true knight he fearlessly came forth on to the battlefield; and I could tell thee the same of many others, who though they did not actually experience martyrdom, were martyrs in will like Dominic; great labourers were these sent by my Father to labour in his vineyard to extirpate the thorns of vice, planting the virtues in their stead. Of a truth Dominic and Francis were two columns of the holy Church. Francis with the poverty which was specially his own, as has been said, and Dominic with his learning."

CHAPTER CXL

Of the excellence of the obedient, and of the misery of the disobedient members of the religious Orders.

"NOW that places suitable for obedience have been found, namely, these ships commanded by the Holy Spirit through the medium of their superiors, for, as I told thee, the Holy Spirit is the true Master of these ships, which are built in the light of the most holy faith by those who have the light to know that my clemency, the Holy Spirit, will steer them, and having thus shown thee the place of obedience and its perfection, I will speak to thee of the obedience and of the disobedience of those who travel in such a ship, speaking of all together and not of one ship—that is, one Order—in particular, showing thee the sin of the disobedient and the virtue of the obedient, so that a man may better know the one by contrast with the other, and

how he should walk if he would enter the ship of a religious Order. How should he walk who wishes to enter this state of perfect and particular obedience? With the light of holy faith, by which he will know that he must slay his self-will with the knife of hatred of every sensual passion, taking the spouse which charity gives him, together with her sister. The spouse is true and prompt obedience, and the sister, patience; and he must also take the nurse of humility, for without this nurse obedience would perish of hunger, for obedience soon dies in a soul deprived of this little virtue of humility.

"Humility is not alone, but has the handmaid of contempt of self and of the world, which causes the soul to hold herself vile, and not to desire honour but shame. Thus dead to himself, should he who is old enough enter the ship of a religious Order, but however he may enter it (for I have told thee that I call souls in diverse ways), he should acquire and preserve this affection, hurrying generously to seize the key of the obedience of his Order, which will open the little door which is in the panel of the door of heaven. Such as these have undertaken to open the little door, doing without the great key of general obedience, which opens the door of heaven, as I have said to thee. They have taken a little key, passing through a low and narrow opening in the great door. This small door is part of the great door, as thou mayest see in any real door. They should keep this key when they have got it, and not throw it away. And because the truly obedient have seen with the light of faith that they will never be able to pass through this little door with the load of their riches and the weight of their own will without great fatigue and without losing their life, and that they cannot walk with head erect without breaking their neck, whether they wish to or not, they cast from them the load of their riches, and of their own will observing the vow of voluntary poverty, refusing to possess anything, for they see by the light of faith to what ruin they would come if they transgressed obedience, and the vow of poverty which they promised to keep. The dis-

obedient walk in pride, holding their heads erect, and if sometimes it suits their convenience to obey they do not incline their heads with humility, but proudly do so, because they must, which force breaks the neck of their will, for they fulfil their obedience with hatred of their Order and of their superior. Little by little they are ruined on another point, for they transgress the vow of continence, for he who does not constrain his appetite or strip himself of temporal substance makes many relations and finds plenty of friends who love him for their own profit. From these relations they go on to close intimacies, their body they tend luxuriously, for being without either the nurse of humility or her sister, self-contempt, they live in their own pleasure richly and delicately, not like religious but like nobles, without watching or prayer. This and many other things happen to them because they have money to spend, for if they had it not they could not spend it. They fall into mental and physical impurity, for if sometimes from shame or through lack of means they abstain physically, they indulge themselves mentally, for it is impossible for a man with many worldly relations, of delicate habits and disordinate greediness, who watches not nor prays, to preserve his mind pure. Wherefore the perfectly obedient man sees from afar with the light of holy faith the evil and the loss which would come to him from temporal possessions and from walking weighed down by his own will; he also sees that he is obliged to pass by this narrow door, and that in such a state he would die before he would be able to pass it, having no key of obedience wherewith to open it, for, as I said to thee, he is obliged to pass through it. Wherefore it is that whether he will or no he should not leave the ship of the Order, but should walk the narrow path of obedience to his superior.

"Wherefore the perfectly obedient man rises above himself and his own sensuality, and rising above his own feelings with living faith, places self-hatred as servant in the house of his soul to drive out the enemy of self-love, for he does not wish that his spouse, Obedience, given him

with the light of faith by her mother, Charity, should be offended; so he drives out the enemy and puts in his place the nurse and companions of his spouse.

"The love of obedience places in the house of his soul the lovers of his spouse, Obedience, who are the true and royal virtues, the customs and observances of his Order, so that this sweet spouse enters his soul with her sister, Patience, and her nurse, Humility, together with Self-contempt and Self-hatred, and when she has entered she possesses peace and quiet, for her enemies have been exiled. She dwells in the garden of true continence, with the sun of intellectual light shining in, the eye of holy faith fixed on the object of my truth, for her object is my truth, and the fire of love with which she observes the rules of the Order warms all her servants and companions.

"Who are her enemies who have been expelled? The chief is self-love, producing pride, the enemy of humility and charity. Impatience is the enemy of patience, disobedience of true obedience, infidelity of faith, presumption and self-confidence do not accord with the true hope which the soul should have in me; injustice cannot be conformed to justice, nor imprudence to prudence, nor intemperance to temperance, nor the transgression of the commandments of the Order to perfect observance of them, nor the wicked conversation of those who live in sin to the good conversation of my servants. These are a man's enemies, causing him to leave the good customs and traditions of his Order. He has also those other cruel enemies, anger, which wars against his benevolence; cruelty, against his kindness; wrath, against his benignity; hatred of virtue, against the love of virtue; impurity, against chastity; negligence, against solicitude; ignorance, against knowledge, and sloth against watchfulness and continued prayer.

"And since he knew by the light of faith that all these were his enemies who would defile his spouse, holy obedience, he appointed hatred to drive them out, and love to replace them with her friends. Wherefore with the knife of hatred he slew his perverse self-will, who,

nourished by self-love, gave life to all these enemies of true obedience, and having cut off the source by which all the others are preserved in life, he remains free and in peace without any war, for there is no one to make war on him, for the soul has cut off from herself that which kept her in bitterness and in sadness. What makes war on obedience? Injuries? No, for the obedient man is patient, patience being the sister of obedience. The weight of the observances of the Order? No, for obedience causes him to fulfil them. Does the weight of obedience give him pain? No, for he has trampled on his own will, and does not care to examine or judge the will of his superior, for with the light of faith he sees my will in him, believing truly that my clemency causes him to command according to the needs of his subject's salvation. Is he disgusted and angry at having to perform the humble duties of the Order or to endure the mockeries, reproofs, jibes, and insults which are often cast at him, or to be held at little worth? No, for he has conceived love for self-contempt and self-hatred. Wherefore he rejoices with patience, exulting with delight and joy in the company of his spouse, true obedience, for the only thing which saddens him is to see me, his Creator, offended. His conversation is with those who truly fear me, and if he should converse with those who are separated from my will, it is not in order to conform himself to their sins, but to draw them out of their misery, for through the brotherly love which he has in his heart towards them he would like to give them the good which he possesses, seeing that more glory and praise would be given to my name by many observing aright their Order than by him doing so alone. Wherefore he endeavours to convert religious and seculars by his words and by prayer, and by every means by which he can draw them out of the darkness of mortal sin. Thus the conversations of a truly obedient man are good and perfect, whether they be with just men or with sinners, through his rightly ordered love and the breadth of his charity. Of his cell he makes a heaven, delighting there to converse with me, his Supreme

and Eternal Father, with the affection of love, flying idleness with humble and continual prayer, and when, through the illusion of the devil, thoughts come crowding into his cell, he does not sit down on the bed of negligence embracing idleness, nor care to examine by reason the thoughts or opinions of his heart, but he flies sloth, rising above himself and his senses with hatred and true humility, patiently enduring the weariness which he feels in his mind, and resisting by watching and humble prayer, fixing the eye of his intellect on me, and seeing with the light of faith that I am his helper, and both can and will help him, and open to him the eyes of my kindness, and that it is I who permit this suffering in order that he may be more eager to fly himself and come to me. And if it should seem to him that on account of his great weariness and the darkness of his mind, mental prayer is impossible, he recites vocal prayers, or busies himself with some corporal exercises, so that by these means he may avoid idleness. He looks at me with the light which I give him through love, which draws forth true humility, for he deems himself unworthy of the peace and quiet of mind of my other servants, but rather worthy of pain, for he despises himself in his own mind with hatred and self-reproach, thinking that he can never endure enough pain, for neither his hope nor my providence fail him, but with faith and the key of obedience he passes over this stormy sea in the ship of his Order, dwelling thus in his cell as has been said, and avoiding idleness.

"The obedient man wishes to be the first to enter choir and the last to leave it, and when he sees a brother more obedient than himself he regards him in his eagerness with a holy envy, stealing from him the virtue in which he excels, not wishing, however, that his brother should have less thereof, for if he wished this he would be separated from brotherly love. The obedient man does not leave the refectory, but visits it continually and delights at being at table with the poor. And as a sign that he delights therein, and so as to have no reason to remain without, he has abandoned his temporal substance, observing so

perfectly the vow of poverty that he blames himself for considering even the necessities of his body. His cell is full of the odour of poverty, and not of clothes; he has no fear that thieves will come to rob him, or that rust or moth will corrupt his garments; and if anything is given to him, he does not think of laying it by for his own use, but freely shares it with his brethren, not thinking of the morrow, but rather depriving himself to-day of what he needs, thinking only of the kingdom of heaven and how he may best observe true obedience.

"And in order that he may better keep to the path of humility, he submits to small and great, to poor and rich, and becomes the servant of all, never refusing labour, but serving all with charity. The obedient man does not wish to fulfil his obedience in his own way, or to choose his time or place, but prefers the way of his Order and of his superior. All this the truly and perfectly obedient man does without pain and weariness of mind. He passes with this key in his hand through the narrow door of the Order, easily and without violence, because he observes the vows of poverty, true obedience, and continence, having abandoned the heights of pride, and bowed his head to obedience through humility. He does not break his neck through impatience, but is patient with fortitude and enduring perseverance, the friends of obedience. Thus he passes by the assaults of the devils, mortifying and macerating his flesh, stripping it bare of all pleasures and delights and clothing it with the labours of the Order in a faith which despises nothing, for as a child who does not remember the blows and injuries inflicted on him by his father, so this child of the spirit does not remember the injuries, pains, or blows inflicted on him by his superior in the Order, but calling him humbly, turns to him without anger, hatred, or rancour, but with meekness and benevolence.

"These are those little ones of whom my Truth spoke to the disciples, who were contending among themselves which of them should be the greater, for calling a child, he said: '*Allow the little ones to come to me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven to be; whoever will not humble*

himself like this child (that is, who will not keep this childlike condition), *shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. For he who humbles himself*, dearest daughter, *will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be humbled*,' which also was said to you by my Truth. Justly, therefore, are these humble little ones, humiliated and subjected through love, with true and holy obedience, who do not kick against the pricks of their Order or superior, exalted by me, the Supreme and Eternal Father, with the true citizens of the blessed life, when they are rewarded for all their labours, and in this life also do they taste eternal life."

CHAPTER CXLI

How the truly obedient receive a hundredfold for one, and also eternal life; and what is meant by this one, and this hundredfold.

"IN them is fulfilled the saying of the sweet and amorous Word, my only-begotten Son, in the Gospel when he replied to Peter's demand, '*Master, we have left everything for thy love's sake, and have followed thee, what wilt thou give us?*' My Truth replied, '*I will give you a hundredfold for one, and you shall possess eternal life.*' As if my Truth had wished to say, 'Thou hast done well, Peter, for in no other way couldst thou follow me. And I, in this life, will give thee a hundredfold for one.' And what is this hundredfold, beloved daughter, besides which the apostle obtained eternal life? To what did my Truth refer? To temporal substance?

"Properly speaking, no. Do I not, however, often cause one who gives alms to multiply in temporal goods? In return for what do I this? In return for the gift of his own will. This is the one for which I repay him a hundredfold. What is the meaning of the number a hundred? A hundred is a perfect number, and cannot be added to except by recommencing from the first. So charity is the most perfect of all the virtues, so perfect

that no higher virtue can be attained, except by recommencing at the beginning of self-knowledge, and thus increasing many hundredfold in merit; but you always necessarily arrive at the number one hundred. This is that hundredfold which is given to those who have given me the unit of their own will, both in general obedience, and in the particular obedience of the religious life. And in addition to this hundred you also possess eternal life, for charity alone enters into eternal life, like a mistress bringing with her the fruit of all the other virtues, while they remain outside, bringing their fruit, I say, unto me, the Eternal Life, in whom the obedient taste eternal life. It is not by faith that they taste eternal life, for they experience in its essence that which they have believed through faith; nor by hope, for they possess that for which they had hoped, and so with all the other virtues, Queen Charity alone enters and possesses me, her possessor. See, therefore, that these little ones receive a hundredfold for one, and also eternal life, for here they receive the fire of divine charity figured by the number a hundred (as has been said). And because they have received this hundredfold from me, they possess a wonderful and hearty joy, for there is no sadness in charity, but the joy of it makes the heart large and generous, not narrow or double. A soul wounded by this sweet arrow does not appear one thing in face and tongue while her heart is different. She does not serve, or act towards her neighbour with dissembling and ambition, because charity is an open book to be read by all. Wherefore the soul who possesses charity never falls into trouble, or the affliction of sadness, or jars with obedience, but remains obedient until death."

CHAPTER CXLII

Of the perversities, miseries, and labours of the disobedient man; and of the miserable fruits which proceed from disobedience.

"CONTRARIWISE, a wicked disobedient man dwells in the ship of a religious Order with so much pain to himself and others, that in this life he tastes the earnest of hell, he remains always in sadness and confusion of mind, tormented by the sting of conscience, with hatred of his Order and superior, insupportable to himself. What a terrible thing it is, my daughter, to see one who has once taken the key of obedience of a religious Order, living in disobedience, to which he has made himself a slave, for of disobedience he has made his mistress with her companion impatience, nourished by pride, and his own pleasure, which pride (as has been said) issues from self-love. For him everything is the contrary to what it would be for the obedient man. For how can this wretch be in any other state than suffering, for he is deprived of charity, he is obliged by force to incline the neck of his own will, and pride keeps it erect, all his desires are in discord with the will of the Order. The Order commands obedience, and he loves disobedience; the Order commands voluntary poverty, and he avoids it, possessing and acquiring riches; the Order commands continence and purity, and he desires lewdness. By transgressing these three vows, my daughter, a religious comes to ruin, and falls into so many miseries, that his aspect is no longer that of a religious but of an incarnate devil, as in another place I related to thee at greater length. I will, however, tell thee something now of their delusion, and of the fruit which they obtained by disobedience to the commendation and exhortation of obedience. This wretched man is deluded by his self-love, because the eye of his intellect is fixed, with a dead faith, on pleasing his self-will, and on things of the world. He left the world in body, but remained there in his affections, and because obedience seems wearisome to him he wishes to disobey in order to avoid weariness; whereby he arrives

at the greatest weariness of all, for he is obliged to obey either by force or by love, and it would have been better and less wearisome to have obeyed by love than without it. Oh! how deluded he is, and no one else deceives him but himself. Wishing to please himself he only gives himself displeasure, for the actions which he will have to do, through the obedience imposed on him, do not please him. He wishes to enjoy delights and make this life his eternity, but the Order wishes him to be a pilgrim, and continually proves it to him; for when he is in a nice pleasant resting-place, where he would like to remain for the pleasures and delights he finds there, he is transferred elsewhere, and the change gives him pain, for his will was active against his obedience, and yet he is obliged to endure the discipline and labours of the Order, and thus remains in continual torment. See, therefore, how he deludes himself; for, wishing to fly pain, he on the contrary falls into it, for his blindness does not let him know the road of true obedience, which is a road of truth founded by the obedient Lamb, my only-begotten Son, who removed pain from it, so that he walks by the road of lies, believing that he will find delight there, but finding on the contrary pain and bitterness. Who is his guide? Self-love, that is, his own passion for disobedience. Such a man thinks like a fool to navigate this tempestuous sea, with the strength of his own arms, trusting in his own miserable knowledge, and will not navigate it in the arms of his Order, and of his superior. Such a one is indeed in the ship of the Order in body, and not in mind; he has quitted it in desire, not observing the regulations or customs of the Order, nor the three vows which he promised to observe at the time of his profession; he swims in the tempestuous sea, tossed to and fro by contrary winds, fastened only to the ship by his clothes, wearing the religious habit on his body but not on his heart. Such a one is no friar, but a masquerader, a man only in appearance. His life is lower than an animal's, and he does not see that he labours more, swimming with his arms, than the good religious in the ship, or that he is in danger of eternal death; for if his clothes

should be suddenly torn from the ship, which will happen at the moment of death, he will have no remedy. No, he does not see, for he has darkened his light with the cloud of self-love, whence has come his disobedience, which prevents him seeing his misery, wherefore he miserably deceives himself. What fruit is produced by this wretched tree?

"The fruit of death, because the root of his affection is planted in pride, which he has drawn from self-love. Wherefore everything that issues from this root—flowers, leaves, and fruit—is corrupt, and the three boughs of this tree, which are obedience, poverty, and continence, which spring from the foot of the tree; that is, his affections are corrupted. The leaves produced by this tree, which are his words, are so corrupt that they would be out of place in the mouth of a ribald secular; and if he have to preach my doctrine, he does so in polished terms, not simply, as one who should feed souls with the seed of my Word, but with eloquent language. Look at the stinking flowers of this tree, which are his diverse and various thoughts, which he voluntarily welcomes with delight and pleasure, not flying the occasions of them, but rather seeking them in order to be able to accomplish a sinful act, the which is the fruit which kills him, depriving him of the light of grace, and giving him eternal death. And what stench comes from this fruit, sprung from the flowers of the tree? The stench of disobedience, for, in the secret of his heart, he wishes to examine and judge unfaithfully his superior's will; a stench of impurity, for he takes delight in many foul conversations, wretchedly tempting his penitents.

"Wretch that thou art, dost thou not see that under the colour of devotion thou concealest a troop of children? This comes from thy disobedience. Thou hast not chosen the virtues for thy children as does the truly obedient religious; thou strivest to deceive thy superior when thou seest that he denies thee something which thy perverse will desires, using the leaves of smooth or rough words, speaking irreverently and reproving him. Thou canst not endure thy brother, nor even the smallest word and reproof

which he may make to thee, but in such a case thou immediately bringest forth the poisoned fruit of anger and hatred against him, judging that to be done to thy hurt which was done for thy good, and thus taking scandal, thy soul and body living in pain. Why has thy brother displeased thee? Because thou livest for thy own sensual pleasure, thou fliest thy cell as if it were a prison, for thou hast abandoned the cell of self-knowledge, and thus fallen into disobedience, wherefore thou canst not remain in thy material cell. Thou wilt not appear in the refectory against thy will whilst thou hast anything to spend; when thou hast nothing left necessity takes thee there.

"Therefore the obedient have done well, who have chosen to observe their vow of poverty, so that they have nothing to spend, and therefore are not led away from the sweet table of the refectory, where obedience nourishes both body and soul in peace and quiet. The obedient religious does not think of laying a table, or of providing food for himself like this wretched man, to whose taste it is painful to eat in the refectory, wherefore he avoids it; he is always the last to enter the choir, and the first to leave it; with his lips he approaches me, with his heart he is far from me. He gladly escapes from the chapter-house when he can through fear of penance. When he is obliged to be there, he is covered with shame and confusion for the faults which he felt it no shame to commit. What is the cause of this? Disobedience. He does not watch in prayer, and not only does he omit mental prayer, but even the divine office to which he is obliged. He has no fraternal charity, because he loves no one but himself, and that not with a reasonable but with a bestial love. So great are the evils which fall on the disobedient; so many are the fruits of sorrow which he produces, that thy tongue could not relate them. Oh! disobedience, which deprives the soul of the light of obedience, destroying peace, and giving war! Disobedience destroys life and gives death, drawing the religious out of the ship of the observance of his Order, to drown him in the sea, making him swim in the strength of his own arms, and not repose on those of

the Order. Disobedience clothes him with every misery, causes him to die of hunger, taking away from him the food of the merit of obedience, it gives him continual bitterness, depriving him of every sweetness and good, causing him to dwell with every evil. In this life it gives him the earnest of cruel torments to endure, and if he do not amend before his clothes are loosened from the ship at death, disobedience will lead the soul to eternal damnation, together with the devils who fell from heaven, because they rebelled against me. In the same way hast thou, O disobedient man, having rebelled against obedience and cast from thee the key which would have opened the door of heaven, opened instead the door of hell with the key of disobedience."

CHAPTER CXLIII

Of the imperfection of those who live tepidly in religion, because they guard against mortal sin only; and of the remedy by which they can be cured of their tepidity.

"How many are these, dearest daughter, who live thus to-day in this ship?

"Many, for there are but few of the opposite sort, that is to say, who are truly obedient. There are, however, between those who are perfect and these wretches, a goodly number of those who live in an ordinary way in their Order, neither perfectly as they ought, nor wickedly; preserving, that is to say, their conscience in that they do not sin mortally, but living in tepidity and coldness of heart. Wherefore, if these do not exercise themselves a little in the observance of the Order, they are in great danger, and stand in need of much watchfulness, and of being roused from their tepidity, for if they remain as they are they are very apt to fall, and even if they do not fall, they live according to their own choice and human pleasure, under colour of a religious life, studying rather to observe the ceremonies of the Order, than the Order

itself—so that often through their scanty light they will be disposed to judge those who observe the Order more perfectly than they do, though fulfilling the ceremonies to which they are so devoted with less perfection. Wherefore, in every way it is dangerous for them to remain in this commonplace obedience; for they coldly fulfil their obediences with much labour and pain, because to a cold heart it is wearisome to endure anything, and however much they may endure, they have but little fruit of it. They offend against their own perfection on which they have entered, and which they are bound to observe, and although they do less evil than those others of whom I have spoken to thee, they yet do evil. For they did not leave the world to content themselves with the key of obedience in general, but in order to unlock the door of heaven with the special key of the obedience of their Order, which should be fastened with the cord of self-contempt to the girdle of humility, as has been said, and held tightly in the hand of burning love. Thou must know, dearest daughter, that these are indeed fit to reach great perfection if they choose, because they are nearer to it than those other wretches, but in another sense it is harder to raise them from their imperfections than the wicked man from his sin. Dost thou know why? Because the sinner knows clearly that he does evil, and his conscience shows it him, and self-love which has weakened him is the reason why he does not struggle to abandon the sin which he sees to be evil, with a natural light. Wherefore if you ask such a one—'Dost thou not know it to be evil to do this?' he will reply—'Yes, but so great is my fragility that I do not seem able to escape from it.' It is not indeed true, for with my help he can escape if he wish; nevertheless, he knows that he is doing wrong, which knowledge renders it easy for him to abandon his sin, if he really wills to do so. But these tepid ones who neither do much harm nor much good do not recognise their state of obedience, nor how uncertain is their position; not knowing it they take no pains to rise from it nor do they care to have it pointed out to them, and indeed, even when

it is shown them, they remain bound by the chain of habit and custom through the coldness of their heart. How shall they be made to rise from their condition? Let them take self-knowledge and hatred of their own pleasure and reputation and place them as fuel on the fire of my divine charity, betrothing themselves afresh, as they did when they entered the Order, to the spouse of true obedience with the ring of holy faith, and let them no longer sleep in that state which is very displeasing to me and dangerous to them. Rightly can the word be said to them, *Be accursed, ye who are lukewarm; if only ye were altogether cold; if ye do not amend, I will vomit you out of my mouth.* And how will this happen? In the way which I have told thee, for if they do not rise they are apt to fall, and if they fall they will be reprobated by me. I would prefer that they should be as ice, that is to say, that they should have remained in the world under general obedience, which is, as it were, a block of ice, compared with the fire of the truly obedient. Wherefore I said, *If only you were cold.* I have explained the words to thee in order that thou mightest not fall into the error of thinking that I would rather that a man should be in the ice of mortal sin than in the tepidity of imperfection. No, it is not possible for me to wish any man to be in sin, for the poison of sin has no place in me; on the contrary, sin displeased me so much in man, that I did not let it pass without punishment, and since man was not sufficient to endure the pain due to his sin—I sent the Word—my only-begotten Son, and he obediently worked out this pain in his own body. Let them arise therefore and exercise themselves in watching and humble and continual prayer—let them look at their Order, and on their founders who were men as they are, fed by the same food, bound in the same way, and having the same God then as now. My power has not grown weak; my will desires your salvation no less than theirs; my wisdom has not grown dim, but still illuminates you, so that you may know my truth. Therefore they can rise if they will—if, that is to say, they will place their state before the eye of their intellect,

piercing the cloud of self-love, and running in the light with those who are perfectly obedient. In this way they will join them, but in no other—so this is their remedy."

CHAPTER CXLIV

Of the excellence of obedience, and of the advantages which it brings to him who truly lays hold of it.

"THIS is the true remedy, possessed by the really obedient man, who renews it every day, increasing the virtue of obedience with the light of faith, longing for insults and mockery, that heavy labours should be imposed on him by his superior for the virtue of obedience, and of her sister patience not to grow rusty. So that when the time comes that they are needed, they never fail or become difficult to exercise, wherefore the obedient man is continually sounding the instrument of his desire, and lets no opportunity pass, so great is his appetite for obedience. Obedience is an eager spouse who does not wish to remain idle. O delightful obedience! O pleasant! O sweet! O illuminative! For thou hast scattered the darkness of self-love. Thou, O vivifying obedience, givest the life of grace to the soul who has chosen thee for spouse, slaying his own will, which brings war and death to the soul. Thou art so generous that thou subjectest thyself to every rational creature. Thou art benignant and kind, and meekly bearest the greatest weights, for thou art accompanied by fortitude and true patience. Thou art crowned with true perseverance, thou dost not fail through the importunity of thy superior on account of the heavy loads which he indiscreetly may impose upon thee, but with the light of faith endurest everything. Thou art so closely bound to humility that no creature can snatch thee from the hand of the soul (which is holy desire) who possesses thee.

"What more can we say, dearest and beloved daughter, of this most excellent virtue? We will say that it is a

good without any admixture of evil—that it remains hidden in the ship—so that no contrary wind may hurt it, that it causes the soul to advance leaning on the arms of the Order and of her superior, and not on her own, because the truly obedient man has not to give an account of himself to me—his superior has that responsibility.

"Become enamoured, O beloved daughter, of this glorious virtue. Dost thou wish to show gratitude for the benefits which thou hast received from me, thy Eternal Father? Be obedient, for obedience proceeding from charity shows gratitude. It will prove to thee thy own gratitude, if thou art not ignorant, because it proceeds from knowledge of my truth. It is a good which can be seen in the example of the Word, who as your model taught you the way of obedience, being obedient himself unto the shameful death of the cross, with which obedience he unlocked the gate of heaven, and established both general obedience and the particular obedience of religion, as I related to thee at the beginning of this treatise of obedience. This obedience gives a light in the soul, which shows whether she is faithful to me and her order and superior, in which light of holy faith she forgets herself; for, by the obedience which she has acquired through the light of faith, she shows that her will is dead to its own feeling, and seeks the advantage of others and not her own. Just as the disobedient man who examines the will of his superior, and judges it according to his own low opinion and darkened knowledge instead of judging his own perverse will, which gives him death, the truly obedient man, illuminated by faith, judges the will of his superior to be good, and therefore does not examine it, but inclines his head and nourishes his soul with the odour of true and holy obedience. And this virtue increases in the soul in proportion to the shining of the light of faith, with which the soul knows herself, and me whom she loves, and humbles herself; and the more she loves me and humbles herself, the more obedient she becomes, for obedience and her sister patience prove whether the soul is in truth clothed with the nuptial

garment of charity, which is necessary to enter into eternal life. In this way their obedience opens the door of heaven, while charity, who gave this key to the soul, enters with the fruit of obedience. I have told thee that charity alone enters, while every other virtue remains without. But obedience is rightly the key which opens the door, because the disobedience of the first man closed it, and it was the obedience of the humble, faithful, immaculate Lamb, my only-begotten Son, that opened the door of eternal life, which had so long remained closed.

CHAPTER CXLV

A distinction between two kinds of obedience; the one that of religious, and the other that paid to any secular person.

"As I have said to thee, he left this sweet obedience as his rule and doctrine, giving it to you as the key to open the door by which you reach your end. He left it by command in the case of general obedience, and by counsel for those of you who should wish to advance to great perfection and pass through the narrow door of religious life. And there are also those who belong to no religious Order, and yet are in the ship of perfection. Such as these observe the perfection of the counsels outside religion, having renounced the riches and pomps of the world, both in fact and in thought, and observing continence, some in the virginal state and some without virginity. They observe obedience, submitting, as I told thee in another place, to some creature whom they strive to obey perfectly until death. And if thou shouldst ask me whether these or they who dwell in a religious Order have greater merit, I should reply that the merit of obedience is not measured according to the act or place, as being greater when performed by a good man than by a bad man, or by a secular than by a religious, but according to the measure of love of him who obeys; for to a truly obedient man the imperfection of a wicked superior does no harm; rather it some-

times profits him, because through the persecutions and unwisely-given weight of a too heavy obedience he may acquire both the virtue of obedience and her sister patience. Nor does the imperfection of the place hurt him. I say 'imperfection,' for religion is more perfect, firm, and stable than any other condition of life. Wherefore the place of those who hold the little key of obedience, observing the counsels outside a religious Order, I indeed call imperfect, but not so their obedience, which is of no less merit, because all obedience, as has been said, and every other virtue, is measured by the degree of love. It is indeed true that in many other ways, both by the vow which is made to the superior, and also because a religious has more to endure, obedience is better proved in religion than in the world, because in religion every action of the body is bound to this yoke, from which a man cannot free himself when he wishes without mortal sin, because of his vow and the sanction of the holy Church. But these others are not in the same condition. They are bound voluntarily by the love which they have for obedience, but not with a solemn vow. Wherefore they can leave the obedience of any mortal creature without mortal sin, if they have legitimate reasons, though their own defects are not such; for if they leave their obedience through their own defects, they would not do so without a grave fault, though they would not incur mortal sin in the strict sense of the word. Dost thou know the difference between these two?

"This man is like one who should take back what he has given his neighbour through love without any intention of asking for it again, but without having made an agreement to that effect; while the religious gives himself and draws up the agreement of his profession, abandoning himself to the hands of his superior and promising to observe obedience, continence, and voluntary poverty, and the superior on his side promises him eternal life if he observe his vow until his death. In observance, place, and manner, religion is more perfect, and obedience in the world less perfect. In the former a man is safer, and if he fall is more likely to rise, because he has more help; and

the latter is more doubtful and less secure, and a man is more likely if he fall to turn his face backwards, because he does not feel himself bound by a vow, like a religious before he is professed; for until profession he can leave the Order, though afterwards he cannot. But merit, as I said and repeat to thee, is given to the truly obedient man according to the measure of his love; and he may obtain perfect merit in any state, for it is founded on love alone. One man I call to one state, and another to another, according to the fitness of each; but all are filled with love according to their measure; so that if a particular secular loves more than a particular religious he receives more, and the same—a particular religious if he love more than a particular secular—and this is true for all other men."

CHAPTER CXLVI

How God does not reward merit according to the labour of the obedient, nor according to the length of time which it takes, but according to the love and promptitude of the truly obedient; and of the miracles which God has performed by means of this virtue; and of discretion in obedience, and of the works and reward of the truly obedient man.

"I HAVE appointed you all to labour in the vineyard of obedience in different ways, and every man will receive a price, according to the measure of his love, and not according to the work he does, or the length of time for which he works, that is to say, that he who comes early will not have more than he who comes late, as my Truth told you in the holy Gospel by the example of those who were standing idle and were sent by the lord of the vineyard to labour; for he gave as much to those who went at dawn, as to those who went at prime or at terce, and those who went at sext, at none, and even at vespers, received as much as the first. My Truth showing you in this way that you are rewarded not according to time or work, but according to the measure of your love. Many are placed in their childhood to work in the vineyard; some enter

later in life, and others in old age; sometimes these latter labour with such fire of love, seeing the shortness of the time, that they rejoin those who entered in their childhood, because they have advanced but slowly. By love of obedience, then, does the soul receive her merit, filling the vessel of her heart in me, the Sea Pacific. There are many whose obedience is so prompt, and has become, as it were, so incarnate in them, that not only do they wish to see reason in what is ordered them by their superior, but they hardly wait until the word is out of his mouth, for with the light of faith they understand his intention. Wherefore the truly obedient man obeys rather the intention than the word, judging that the will of his superior is fixed in my will, and that therefore his command comes from my dispensation, and from my will, wherefore I say to thee that he rather obeys the intention than the word. He also obeys the word, having first spiritually obeyed in affection his superior's will, seeing and judging it by the light of faith to be mine. This is well shown in the lives of the Fathers, where you read of a religious who at once obeyed in his affection the command of his superior, commencing to write the letter O, though he had not space to finish it; wherefore to show how pleasing his prompt obedience was to me, my clemency gave him a proof by writing the other half of the letter in gold. This glorious virtue is so pleasing to me, that to no other have I given so many miraculous signs and testimonies, for it proceeds from the height of faith.

"In order to show how pleasing it is to me, the earth obeys this virtue, the animals obey it—water grows solid under the feet of the obedient man. And as for the obedience of the earth, thou rememberest having read of that disciple who, being given a dry stick by his abbot, and being ordered by obedience to plant it in the earth and water it every day, did not proceed to ask how could it possibly do any good, but, without inquiring about possibilities, he fulfilled his obedience in such virtue of faith that the dry wood brought forth leaves and fruits, as a sign that that soul had risen from the dryness of dis-

obedience, and, covered by the green leaves of virtue, had brought forth the fruit of obedience, wherefore the fruit of this tree was called by the holy fathers the fruit of obedience. Thou wilt also find that animals obey the obedient man; for a certain disciple, commanded by obedience, through his purity and virtue caught a dragon and brought it to his abbot, but the abbot, like a true physician of the soul, in order that he might not be tossed about by the wind of vainglory, and to prove his patience, sent him away with harsh words, saying: 'Beast that thou art, thou hast brought along another beast with thyself.' And as to fire, thou hast read in the holy Scripture that many were placed in the fire rather than transgress my obedience, and at my command were not hurt by it. This was the case of the Three Children, who remained happily in the furnace—and of many others of whom I could tell thee. The water bore up Maurus who had been sent by obedience to save a drowning disciple; he did not think of himself, but thought only with the light of faith of how to fulfil the command of his superior, and so walked upon the water as if he had been on dry land, and so saved the disciple. In everything, if thou openest the eye of the intellect, thou wilt find shown forth the excellence of this virtue. Everything else should be abandoned for the sake of obedience. If thou wert lifted up in such contemplation and union of mind with me, that thy body was raised from the earth, and an obedience were imposed on thee (speaking generally, and not in a particular case, which cannot give a law), thou oughtest, if possible, to force thyself to arise, to fulfil the obedience imposed on thee, though thou shouldst never leave prayer except for necessity, charity, or obedience. I say this in order that thou mayest see how prompt I wish the obedience of my servants to be, and how pleasing it is to me. Everything that the obedient man does is a source of merit to him. If he eats, obedience is his food, if he sleeps, his dreams are obedience; if he walks, if he remains still, if he fasts, if he watches—everything that he does is obedience; if he serve his neighbour, it is obedience that he

serves. How is he guided in the choir, in the refectory, or his cell? By obedience, with the light of the most holy faith, with which light he has slain and cast from him his humbled self-will, and abandoned himself with self-hatred to the arms of his order and superior. Reposing with obedience in the ship, allowing himself to be guided by his superior, he has navigated the tempestuous sea of this life, with calm and serene mind and tranquillity of heart, because obedience and faith have taken all darkness from him; he remains strong and firm, having lost all weakness and fear, having destroyed his own will, from which comes all feebleness and disordinate fear. And what is the food of this spouse obedience? She eats knowledge of self, and of me, knowing her own non-existence and sinfulness, and knowing that I am he who is, thus eating and knowing my truth in the Incarnate Word. What does she drink? The blood, in which the Word has shown her my Truth, and the ineffable love which I have for her, and the obedience imposed on him by me, his Eternal Father, so she becomes inebriated with the love and obedience of the Word, losing herself and her own opinions and knowledge, and possessing me by grace, tasting me by love, with the light of faith in holy obedience.

"The obedient man speaks words of peace all his life, and at his death receives that which was promised him at his death by his superior, that is to say, eternal life, the vision of peace, and of supreme and eternal tranquillity and rest, the inestimable good which no one can value or understand, for, being the infinite good, it cannot be understood by anything smaller than itself, like a vessel, which, dipped into the sea, does not comprehend the whole sea, but only that quantity which it contains. The sea alone contains itself. So I, the Sea Pacific, am he who alone can comprehend and value myself truly. And in my own estimate and comprehension of myself I rejoice, and this joy, the good which I have in myself, I share with you, and with all, according to the measure of each. I do not leave you empty, but fill you, giving you perfect beatitude; each man comprehends and knows my good-

ness in the measure in which it is given to him. Thus, then, the obedient man, with the light of faith in the truth burning in the furnace of charity, anointed with humility, inebriated with the blood, in company with his sister patience, and with self-contempt, fortitude, and enduring perseverance, and all the other virtues (that is, with the fruit of the virtues), receives his end from me, his Creator."

CHAPTER CXLVII

This is a brief repetition of the entire book.

"I HAVE now, O dearest and best beloved daughter, satisfied from the beginning to the end thy desire concerning obedience.

"If thou rememberest well, thou didst make four petitions of me with anxious desire, or rather I caused thee to make them in order to increase the fire of my love in thy soul: one for thyself, which I have satisfied, illuminating thee with my truth, and showing thee how thou mayest know this truth which thou didst desire to know; explaining to thee how thou mightest come to the knowledge of it through the knowledge of thyself and me, through the light of faith. The second request thou didst make of me was that I should do mercy to the world. In the third thou didst pray for the mystical body of the holy Church, that I would remove darkness and persecutions from it, punishing its iniquities at thy own desire in thy person. As to this I explained that no penalty inflicted in finite time can satisfy for a sin committed against me, the Infinite Good, unless it is united with the desire of the soul and contrition of the heart. How this is to be done I have explained to thee. I have also told thee that I wish to do mercy to the world, proving to thee that mercy is my special attribute, for through the mercy and the inestimable love which I had for man, I sent to the earth the Word, my only-begotten Son, whom, that thou mightest understand things quite clearly, I represented to thee under the

figure of a Bridge, reaching from earth to heaven, through the union of my divinity with your human nature.

"I also showed thee, to give thee further light concerning my truth, how this Bridge is built on three steps; that is, on the three powers of the soul. These three steps I also represented to thee, as thou knowest, under figures of thy body—the feet, the side, and the mouth—by which I also figured three states of soul—the imperfect state, the perfect state, and the most perfect state, in which the soul arrives at the excellence of unitive love. I have shown thee clearly in each state the means of cutting away imperfection and reaching perfection, and how the soul may know by which road she is walking and of the hidden delusions of the devil and of spiritual self-love. Speaking of these three states I have also spoken of the three judgements which my clemency delivers—one in this life, the second at death on those who die in mortal sin without hope, of whom I told thee that they went under the Bridge by the devil's road, when I spoke to thee of their wretchedness. And the third is that of the last and universal judgement. And I who told thee somewhat of the suffering of the damned and the glory of the blessed, when all shall have reassumed their bodies given by me, also promised thee, and now again I repeat my promise, that through the long endurance of my servants I will reform my spouse. Wherefore I invite thee to endure, myself lamenting with thee over her iniquities. And I have shown thee the excellence of the ministers I have given her, and the reverence in which I wish seculars to hold them, showing thee the reason why their reverence towards my ministers should not diminish on account of the sins of the latter, and how displeasing to me is such diminution of reverence; and of the virtue of those who live like angels. And while speaking to thee on this subject, I also touched on the excellence of the sacraments. And further, wishing thee to know of the states of tears and whence they proceed, I spoke to thee on the subject and told thee that all tears issue from the fountain of the heart, and pointed out their causes to thee in order.

"I told thee not only of the four states of tears, but also of the fifth, which germinates death. I have also answered thy fourth request, that I would provide for the particular case of an individual; I have provided as thou knowest. Further than this, I have explained my providence to thee, in general and in particular, showing thee how everything is made by divine providence, from the first beginning of the world until the end, giving you and permitting everything to happen to you, both tribulations and consolations temporal and spiritual, and every circumstance of your life for your good, in order that you may be sanctified in me, and my truth be fulfilled in you, which truth is that I created you in order to possess eternal life, and manifested this with the blood of my only-begotten Son, the Word.

"I have also in my last words fulfilled thy desire and my promise to speak of the perfection of obedience and the imperfection of disobedience; and how obedience can be obtained and how destroyed. I have shown it to thee as a universal key, and so it is. I have also spoken to thee of particular obedience, and of the perfect and imperfect, and of those in religion, and of those in the world, explaining the condition of each distinctly to thee, and of the peace given by obedience, and the war of disobedience, and how the disobedient man is deceived, showing thee how death came into the world by the disobedience of Adam, and how I, the Eternal Father, Supreme and Eternal Truth, give thee this conclusion of the whole matter, that in the obedience of the only-begotten Word, my Son, you have life, and as from that first old man you contracted the infection of death, so all of you who will take the key of obedience have contracted the infection of the life of the new man, sweet Jesus, of whom I made a Bridge, the road to heaven being broken. And now I urge thee and my other servants to grief, for by your grief and humble and continual prayer I will do mercy to the world. Die to the world and hasten along this way of truth, so as not to be taken prisoner if thou goest slowly. I demand this of thee now more than at first, for now I have manifested to thee my truth. Beware

that thou never leave the cell of self-knowledge, but in this cell preserve and spend the treasure which I have given thee, which is a doctrine of truth founded upon the living stone, sweet Christ Jesus, clothed in light which scatters darkness, with which doctrine clothe thyself, my best beloved and sweetest daughter, in the truth."

CHAPTER CXLVIII

How this most devout soul, thanking and praising God, makes prayer for the whole world and for the holy Church, and commending the virtue of faith brings this work to an end.

THEN that soul, having seen with the eye of the intellect, and having known by the light of holy faith the truth and excellence of obedience, hearing and tasting it with love and ecstatic desire, gazed upon the divine majesty and gave thanks to him, saying, "Thanks, thanks to thee, O Eternal Father, for thou hast not despised me, the work of thy hands, nor turned thy face from me, nor despised my desires; thou, the Light, hast not regarded my darkness; thou, true Life, hast not regarded my living death; thou, the Physician, hast not been repelled by my grave infirmities; thou, the Eternal Purity, hast not considered the many miseries of which I am full; thou, who art the Infinite, has overlooked that I am finite; thou, who art Wisdom, hast overlooked my folly; thy wisdom, thy goodness, thy clemency, thy infinite good, have overlooked these infinite evils and sins, and the many others which are in me. Having known the truth through thy clemency, I have found thy charity, and the love of my neighbour. What has constrained me? Not my virtues, but only thy charity. May that same charity constrain thee to illuminate the eye of my intellect with the light of faith, so that I may know and understand the truth which thou hast manifested to me. Grant that my memory may be capable of retaining thy benefits, that my will may burn in the fire of thy charity, and may that fire so work in me that I give

my body to blood, and that by that blood given for love of the blood, together with the key of obedience, I may unlock the door of heaven. I ask this of thee with all my heart, for every rational creature, both in general and in particular, in the mystical body of the holy Church. I confess and do not deny that thou didst love me before I existed, and that thy love for me is ineffable, as if thou wast mad with love for thy creature. O Eternal Trinity! O Godhead! which Godhead gave value to the blood of thy Son, thou, O Eternal Trinity, art a deep Sea, into which the deeper I enter the more I find, and the more I find the more I seek; the soul cannot be satiated in thy abyss, for she continually hungers after thee, the Eternal Trinity, desiring to see thee with light in thy light. As the hart desires the spring of living water, so my soul desires to leave the prison of this dark body and see thee in truth. How long, O Eternal Trinity, fire and abyss of love, will thy face be hidden from my eyes? Melt at once the cloud of my body. The knowledge which thou hast given me of thyself in thy truth, constrains me to long to abandon the heaviness of my body, and to give my life for the glory and praise of thy name, for I have tasted and seen with the light of the intellect in thy light, the abyss of thee—the Eternal Trinity, and the beauty of thy creature, for, looking at myself in thee, I saw myself to be thy image, my life being given me by thy power, O Eternal Father, and thy wisdom, which belongs to thy only-begotten Son, shining in my intellect and my will, being one with thy Holy Spirit, who proceeds from thee and thy Son, by whom I am able to love thee. Thou, Eternal Trinity, art my creator, and I am the work of thy hands, and I know through the new creation which thou hast given me in the blood of thy Son, that thou art enamoured of the beauty of thy workmanship. O Abyss, O Eternal Godhead, O Sea Profound! what more couldst thou give me than thyself? thou art the fire which ever burns without being consumed; thou consumest in thy heat all the soul's self-love; thou art the fire which takes away all cold; with thy light thou dost illuminate

me so that I may know all thy truth; thou art that light above all light, which illuminates supernaturally the eye of my intellect, clarifying the light of faith so abundantly and so perfectly, that I see that my soul is alive, and in this light receives thee—the true light. By the light of faith I have acquired wisdom in the wisdom of the Word —thy only-begotten Son. In the light of faith I am strong, constant, and persevering. In the light of faith, I hope, suffer me not to faint by the way. This light, without which I should still walk in darkness, teaches me the road, and for this I said, O Eternal Father, that thou hast illuminated me with the light of holy faith. Of a truth this light is a sea, for the soul revels in thee, Eternal Trinity, the Sea Pacific. The water of the sea is not turbid, and causes no fear to the soul, for she knows the truth; it is a deep which manifests sweet secrets, so that where the light of thy faith abounds, the soul is certain of what she believes. This water is a magic mirror into which thou, the Eternal Trinity, biddest me gaze, holding it with the hand of love, that I may see myself, who am thy creature, there represented in thee, and thyself in me through the union which thou didst make of thy godhead with our humanity. For this light I know to represent to myself thee—the Supreme and Infinite Good, Good Blessed and Incomprehensible, Good Inestimable. Beauty above all beauty; Wisdom above all wisdom—for thou art wisdom itself. Thou, the food of the angels, hast given thyself in a fire of love to men; thou, the garment which covers all our nakedness, feedest the hungry with thy sweetness. O Sweet, without any bitter, O Eternal Trinity, I have known in thy light, which thou hast given me with the light of holy faith, the many and wonderful things thou hast declared to me, explaining to me the path of supreme perfection, so that I may no longer serve thee in darkness, but with light, and that I may be the mirror of a good and holy life, and arise from my miserable sins, for through them I have hitherto served thee in darkness. I have not known thy truth and have not loved it. Why did I not know thee? Because I did not see thee with

the glorious light of the holy faith; because the cloud of self-love darkened the eye of my intellect, and thou, the Eternal Trinity, hast dissipated the darkness with thy light. Who can attain to thy greatness, and give thee thanks for such immeasurable gifts and benefits as thou hast given me in this doctrine of truth, which has been a special grace over and above the ordinary graces which thou givest also to thy other creatures? Thou hast been willing to condescend to my need and to that of thy creatures—the need of introspection. Having first given the grace to ask the question, thou repliest to it, and satisfiest thy servant, penetrating me with a ray of grace, so that in that light I may give thee thanks. Clothe me, clothe me with thee, O Eternal Truth, that I may run my mortal course with true obedience and the light of holy faith, with which light I feel that my soul is about to become inebriated afresh."

APPENDIX

A LETTER OF SER BARDUCCIO DI PIERO CANIGIANI, CONTAINING THE TRANSIT OF THE SERAPHIC VIRGIN, SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA, TO SISTER CATHERINE PETRIBONI IN THE MONASTERY OF SAN PIERO A MONTICELLI NEAR FLORENCE. IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST.

DEAREST MOTHER IN CHRIST JESUS, and Sister in the holy memory of our blessed mother Catherine, I, Barduccio, a wretched and guilty sinner, recommend myself to your holy prayers as a feeble infant, orphaned by the death of so great a mother. I received your letter and read it with much pleasure, and communicated it to my afflicted mothers here, who, supremely grateful for your great charity and tender love towards them, recommend themselves greatly, for their part, to your prayers, and beg you to recommend them to the Prioress and all the Sisters that they may be ready to do all that may be pleasing to God concerning themselves and you. But since you, as a beloved and faithful daughter, desire to know the end of our common mother, I am constrained to satisfy your desire; and although I know myself to be but little fitted to give such a narration, I will write in any case what my feeble eyes have seen, and what the dull senses of my soul have been able to comprehend.

This blessed virgin and mother of thousands of souls, about the feast of the Circumcision, began to feel so great a change both in soul and body, that she was obliged to alter her mode of life, the action of taking food for her sustenance becoming so loathsome to her, that it was only with the greatest difficulty that she could force herself to take any, and, when she did so, she swallowed nothing of the substance of the food, but had the habit of rejecting it. Moreover, not one drop of water could she swallow for refreshment, whence came to her a most violent and tedious

thirst, and so great an inflammation of her throat that her breath seemed to be fire, with all which, however, she remained in very good health, robust and fresh as usual. In these conditions we reached Sexagesima Sunday, when, about the hour of Vespers, at the time of her prayer, she had so violent a stroke that from that day onwards she was no longer in health. Towards the night of the following Monday, just after I had written a letter, she had another stroke so terrific, that we all mourned her as dead, remaining under it for a long time without giving any sign of life. Then, rising, she stood for an equal space of time, and did not seem the same person as she who had fallen.

From that hour began new travail and bitter pains in her body, and Lent having arrived, she began, in spite of her infirmity, to give herself with such application of mind to prayer that the frequency of the humble sighs and sorrowful plaints which she exhaled from the depth of her heart appeared to us a miracle. I think, too, that you know that her prayers were so fervent that one hour spent in prayer by her reduced that dear tender frame to greater weakness than would be suffered by one who should persist for two whole days in prayer. Meanwhile, every morning, after communion, she arose from the earth in such a state that anyone who had seen her would have thought her dead, and was thus carried back to bed. Thence, after an hour or two, she would arise afresh, and we would go to St Peter's, although a good mile distant, where she would place herself in prayer, so remaining until Vespers, finally returning to the house so worn out that she seemed a corpse.

These were her exercises up till the Third Sunday in Lent, when she finally succumbed, conquered by the innumerable sufferings, which daily increased, and consumed her body, and the infinite afflictions of the soul which she derived from the consideration of the sins which she saw being committed against God, and from the dangers ever more grave to which she knew the holy Church to be exposed, on account of which she remained

greatly overcome, and both internally and externally tormented. She lay in this state for eight weeks, unable to lift her head, and full of intolerable pains, from the soles of her feet to the crown of her head, to such an extent that she would often say: "These pains are truly physical, but not natural; for it seems that God has given permission to the devils to torment this body at their pleasure." And, in truth, it evidently was so; for, if I were to attempt to explain the patience which she practised under this terrible and unheard-of agony, I should fear to injure, by my explanations, facts which cannot be explained. This only will I say, that every time that a new torment came upon her, she would joyously raise her eyes and her heart to God and say: "Thanks to thee, O eternal Spouse, for granting such graces afresh every day to me, thy miserable and most unworthy handmaid!"

In this way her body continued to consume itself until the Sunday before the Ascension; but by that time it was reduced to such a state that it seemed like a corpse in a picture, though I speak not of the face, which remained ever angelical and breathed forth devotion, but of the bosom and limbs, in which nothing could be seen but the bones, covered by the thinnest skin, and so feeble was she from the waist downwards that she could not move herself, even a little, from one side to another. In the night preceding the aforesaid Sunday, about two hours or more before dawn, a great change was produced in her, and we thought that she was approaching the end. The whole family was then called around her, and she, with singular humility and devotion, made signs to those who were standing near that she desired to receive holy Absolution for her faults and the pains due to them, and so it was done. After which she became gradually reduced to such a state that we could observe no other movement than her breathing, continuous, sad, and feeble. On account of this it seemed right to give her extreme unction, which our Abbot of Sant' Antimo did, while she lay as it were deprived of feeling.

After this unction she began altogether to change, and

to make various signs with her head and her arms as if to show that she was suffering from grave assaults of demons, and remained in this calamitous state for an hour and a half, half of which time having been passed in silence, she began to say: "I have sinned! O Lord, have mercy on me!" And this, as I believe, she repeated more than sixty times, raising each time her right arm, and then letting it fall and strike the bed. Then, changing her words, she said as many times again, but without moving her arms: "Holy God, have mercy on me!" Finally she employed the remainder of the above-mentioned time with many other formulas of prayer both humble and devout, expressing various acts of virtue, after which her face suddenly changed from gloom to angelic light, and her tearful and clouded eyes became serene and joyous, in such a manner that I could not doubt that, like one saved from a deep sea, she was restored to herself, which circumstance greatly mitigated the grief of her sons and daughters who were standing around in the affliction you can imagine.

Catherine had been lying on the bosom of Mother Alessia, and now succeeded in rising, and with a little help began to sit up, leaning against the same mother. In the meantime we had put before her eyes a pious picture, containing many relics and various pictures of the saints. She, however, fixed her eyes on the image of the cross set in it, and began to adore it, explaining, in words, certain of her most profound feelings of the goodness of God, and while she prayed, she accused herself in general of all her sins in the sight of God, and, in particular, said: "It is my fault, O Eternal Trinity, that I have offended thee so miserably with my negligence, ignorance, ingratitude, and disobedience, and many other defects. Wretch that I am! for I have not observed thy commandments, either those which are given in general to all, or those which thy goodness laid upon me in particular! O mean creature that I am!" Saying which, she struck her breast, repeating her confession, and continued: "I have not observed thy precept, with which

thou didst command me to seek always to give thee honour, and to spend myself in labours for my neighbour, while I, on the contrary, have fled from labours, especially where they were necessary. Didst thou not command me, O my God! to abandon all thought of myself and to consider solely the praise and glory of thy name in the salvation of souls, and with this food alone, taken from the table of the most holy cross, to comfort myself? But I have sought my own consolation. Thou didst ever invite me to bind myself to thee alone by sweet, loving, and fervent desires, by tears and humble and continuous prayers for the salvation of the whole world and for the reformation of the holy Church, promising me that, on account of them, thou wouldst use mercy with the world, and give new beauty to thy spouse, but I, wretched one, have not corresponded with thy desire, but have remained asleep in the bed of negligence.

"Oh, unhappy that I am! thou hast placed me in charge of souls, assigning to me so many beloved sons, that I should love them with singular love and direct them to thee by the way of life, but I have been to them nothing but a mirror of human weakness; I have had no care of them; I have not helped them with continuous and humble prayer in thy presence, nor have I given them sufficient examples of the good life or the warnings of salutary doctrine. Oh, mean creature that I am! with how little reverence have I received thy innumerable gifts, the graces of such sweet torments and labours which it pleased thee to accumulate on this fragile body, nor have I endured them with that burning desire and ardent love with which thou didst send them to me. Alas! O my Love, through thy excessive goodness thou didst choose me for thy spouse, from the beginning of my childhood, but I was not faithful enough; in fact, I was unfaithful to thee, because I did not keep my memory faithful to thee alone and to thy most high benefits; nor have I fixed my intelligence on the thought of them only or disposed my will to love thee immediately with all its strength."

Of these and many other similar things did that pure

dove accuse herself, rather, as I think, for our example than for her own need, and then, turning to the priest, said: "For the love of Christ crucified, absolve me of all these sins which I have confessed in the presence of God, and of all the others which I cannot remember." That done, she asked again for the plenary indulgence, saying that it had been granted her by Pope Gregory and Pope Urban, saying this as one an-hungered for the blood of Christ. So I did what she asked, and she, keeping her eyes ever fixed on the crucifix, began afresh to adore it with greatest devotion, and to say certain very profound things which I, for my sins, was not worthy to understand, and also on account of the grief with which I was labouring and the anguish with which her throat was oppressed, which was so great that she could hardly utter her words, while we, placing our ears to her mouth, were able to catch one or two now or again, passing them on from one to the other. After this she turned to certain of her sons, who had not been present at a memorable discourse which, many days previously, she had made to the whole family, showing us the way of salvation and perfection, and laying upon each of us the particular task which he was to perform after her death. She now did the same to these others, begging most humbly pardon of all for the slight care which she seemed to have had of our salvation. Then she said certain things to Lucio and to another, and finally to me, and then turned herself straightway to prayer.

Oh! had you seen with what humility and reverence she begged and received many times the blessing of her most sorrowful mother, all that I can say is that it was a bitter-sweet to her. How full of tender affection was the spectacle of the mother, recommending herself to her blessed child, and begging her to obtain a particular grace from God—namely, that in these melancholy circumstances she might not offend him. But all these things did not distract the holy virgin from the fervour of her prayer; and, approaching her end, she began to pray especially for the Catholic Church, for which she declared

she was giving her life. She prayed again for Pope Urban VI, whom she resolutely confessed to be the true Pontiff, and strengthened her sons never to hesitate to give their life for that truth. Then, with the greatest fervour, she besought all her beloved children whom the Lord had given her to love him alone, repeating many of the words which our Saviour used, when he recommended the disciples to the Father, praying with such affection, that, at hearing her, not only our hearts, but the very stones might have been broken. Finally, making the sign of the cross, she blessed us all, and thus continued in prayer to the end of her life for which she had so longed, saying: "Thou, O Lord, callest me, and I come to thee, not through my merits, but through thy mercy alone, which I ask of thee, in virtue of thy blood!" and many times she called out: "Blood! Blood!" Finally, after the example of the Saviour, she said: "Father, into thy hands I commend my soul and my spirit," and thus sweetly, with a face all shining and angelical, she bent her head, and gave up the ghost.

Her transit occurred on the Sunday at the hour of Sext, but we kept her unburied until the hour of Compline on Tuesday, without any odour being perceptible, her body remaining so pure, intact, and fragrant, that her arms, her neck, and her legs remained as flexible as if she were still alive. During those three days the body was visited by crowds of people, and lucky he thought himself who was able to touch it. Almighty God also worked many miracles in that time, which in my hurry I omit. Her tomb is visited devoutly by the faithful, like those of the other holy bodies which are in Rome, and almighty God is granting many graces in the name of his blessed spouse, and I doubt not that there will be many more, and we are made great by hearing of them. I say no more. Recommend me to the Prioress and all the Sisters, for I have, at present, the greatest need of the help of prayer. May almighty God preserve you and help you to grow in his grace.

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CATHERINE OF SIENA, ST.

AUTHOR

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